

# Peacemaking, peacekeeping—international relations, 1918–36

The issues, conflicts, disputes and attitudes that arose during the period from 1918 to 1936 cannot be understood or appreciated without a sound knowledge of the experience of the First World War. This involves not simply an understanding of the causes, events and statistical cost of the war but something much more profound. The First World War was for many a **total war** with all the characteristics attached to that term. The war was a cataclysmic event for Western society, a descent into a brutal and largely futile struggle that undermined or destroyed much of the pre-war world. What was lost was confidence, optimism, stability and faith in the future. Massive political, social and economic upheavals occurred, which influenced events up to the outbreak of the Second World War and even until today.

**Total war** A war in which opponents mobilize all available societal resources—economic, industrial, military, human, political/ideological—in the war effort.

This chapter is designed to assist in the study of the post-war peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts, which form the basis of prescribed subject 1. It addresses the issues relating to creating a settlement at the end of the First World War and the challenges of promoting and maintaining peace in the period from 1918 to 1936. The difficulties in arriving at a peace settlement that reflected both the idealism of US president Woodrow Wilson and the security and territorial concerns of the other powers were particularly complex. Continuing challenges to the Versailles settlement from Germany and Italy created the need to revise and re-examine the Treaty of Versailles on a number of occasions. The period is also concerned with the problems of implementing new ways to preserve peace, such as the League of Nations. Finally, the threats to a peaceful world order presented by revolutionary political movements such as Bolshevism and fascism, as well as the Great Depression, are examined.

Sources that could be used in questions are included throughout the chapter and focus on the following areas:

- the aims of the participants and peacemakers: Woodrow Wilson and the Fourteen Points
- the terms of the Paris peace settlements 1919–20: Versailles, St Germain, Trianon, Neuilly, Sèvres/Lausanne (1923)
- the geo-political and economic impact of the treaties on Europe; the establishment and impact of the mandate system
- enforcement of the provisions of the treaties: US isolationism—the retreat from the Anglo-American Guarantee; disarmament—Washington, London, Geneva conferences
- the League of Nations: effects of the absence of the major powers; the principle of collective security and early attempts at peacekeeping (1920–5)
- the Ruhr Crisis (1923); Locarno and the “Locarno Spring” (1925)
- the Great Depression and threats to international peace and collective security: Manchuria (1931–3) and Abyssinia (1935–6).

By the end of the chapter, you should be able to:

- understand the conflicting aims of the countries involved in the Versailles settlement
- be aware of the terms of the Versailles settlement
- appreciate how these terms may have led to disagreement and conflict
- understand the concepts behind the League of Nations and why these proved difficult to carry out
- be aware of the problems of disarmament
- understand the impact of new political philosophies and economic upheaval
- know and understand the significance of major conferences and agreements reached during this period
- compare and contrast the reaction of major countries to the events of the period
- use the documents to form your own understanding and opinions on the issues presented
- form your own opinions and viewpoints on the controversies in this period.

## Background to the period 1918–36

The period under discussion breaks into two parts. These are separated by the onset of the Great Depression in 1929. In the 1920s there appeared to be little threat to international peace. The powers were exhausted from the war, the defeated nations were too weak to try and reverse the verdict and there was a general revulsion at the thought of another conflict. The foundation of the League of Nations and the idealism of the **Fourteen Points** encouraged many people to believe that a new era of peace would emerge. This was illusory but was supported by the absence of immediate threats to peace and because the League experienced a few successes in dispute resolution. Nevertheless, there were many potential threats and the only nations interested or able to maintain the status quo were Britain and France.

The Great Depression exposed the weakness of the post-Versailles settlements and is regarded by some as the greatest cause of the Second World War. It encouraged Japanese aggression and the rise of Hitler and exposed the inability of the League to maintain the peace. The revisionist powers who had recovered their strength saw an opportunity to pursue their agendas for territory and economic strength.

**Fourteen Points** A series of principles written by Woodrow Wilson as a basis for ending the First World War and creating a more peaceful and progressive world.

### Integrating the theory of knowledge (TOK)

This prescribed subject provides many opportunities for the student to explore the nature of historical knowledge and how historians evaluate and analyse information of various types. This chapter will both increase your understanding of the methodology used by historians and the discipline of history itself.

Through the various questions and exercises you will be able to develop your critical thinking skills in support of the integrated theory of knowledge. There is ample room for debate both on specific issues and about broader philosophical themes. This chapter deals with fundamental aspects of human nature in the relationship between peace and war, and self-interest versus altruism.

An analysis of whether human nature tends to certain fixed patterns of behaviour or might evolve and develop is also worth pursuing. There are a variety of questions and activities in this chapter to initiate discussion.

## Approaching this subject

Prescribed subject 1 covers the period from the end of the First World War to 1936, by which time the prospects of another war were increasing. This is a very important subject as it not only links two of the most influential events of the 20th century—the two world wars—but it examines efforts at peacekeeping and why they failed. This should allow for further discussion about the ways that we might develop strategies to prevent war in the present. Students who are doing this topic are also likely to choose topic 1 in 20th-century history, on the causes, practices and effects of war, and topic 3 on single-party states. For example, knowledge of the First World War will provide valuable background to assist in understanding the work of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The material in this unit provides excellent supporting material for these topics and will help explain and interpret the significance of the events in this prescribed subject.

Not all the events that impact on the peace process are included in this prescribed subject and students are encouraged to locate other examples that relate to or help explain the topics. An example would be the Russo-Polish war of 1920–1 as a route to exploring the geo-political impact of the Versailles peace settlements or the role of the League of Nations. In addition, some examples of successful efforts by the League to prevent conflict are not described. Students might wish to examine these and deepen their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the League.

Students will also be required to focus on the understanding and critical evaluation of source material. These sources are numerous and exist in both written and visual forms. The written forms include books, newspapers, articles, letters, speeches, memoirs and government documents. Visual documents include maps, political cartoons, graphs, statistics and photographs. These sources of information will present many different viewpoints.

### Activity:

#### The First World War in visual art, film and literature

Literature	Art	Film
Siegfried Sassoon, <i>Memoirs of an Infantry Officer</i> , 1930	Cubism: camouflage patterns and Cubist space. Picasso's <i>Guernica</i> , 1937	<i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i> : novel by Erich Maria Remarque, 1929; film Dir. Lewis Milestone, 1930
Robert Graves, <i>Goodbye to All That</i> , 1929, also his poetry.	Dadaism: anti-art and anti-war. Hugo Ball, Tristan Tzara, Cabaret Voltaire	<i>Gallipoli</i> , 1981, Dir. Peter Weir
Ernest Hemingway, <i>A Farewell to Arms</i> , 1929	Otto Dix, his paintings, drawings and print cycle, <i>The War</i> , 1923–4	
The escapist novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald	Franz Marc, <i>The Fate of the Animals</i> , 1913	

Visual art, film and literature are valuable resources through which to judge attitudes, emotions, and reactions to historical events or ideas. Add further examples and details to this chart.

- What does art, film and literature tell you about how the First World War affected people—not only physically, but in terms of their view of the world, their optimism, their faith in the future etc.?
- Consider the views of people from all sectors of society—in terms of their gender, age, occupation and ethnic background.

## The Versailles Conference: the aims and goals of the participants and peacemakers

The aims of the participants in the peace process were the goals that each nation hoped to achieve. In essence, each country wished to gain some advantage from their victory. The losers were not present, so their concerns were not raised. This is a fairly traditional view of peace conferences in that the winners expect to extract some territory or other concessions from the losers.

Versailles was complicated, however, by the presence of Woodrow Wilson and his Fourteen Points, which completely altered the traditional approach to peace conferences. Wilson's ideal was not to create a winner's peace treaty but rather create an environment of generosity in which permanent peace might be assured. This was an entirely new concept and made the work of the conference much more difficult. Some countries, such as Italy, were expecting significant rewards but were left disappointed and embittered. Those countries on the losing side were also disappointed as Wilson was forced to compromise and allow some of the victors to impose harsh conditions on the losers. This is the genesis for the argument that the Treaty of Versailles satisfied neither winners nor losers.

### Aims and goals—some background issues

The aims and goals of the nations that met in Versailles were framed not only by their war experiences but by hopes and aspirations that had existed prior to the war. These encompassed such things as national liberation or independence from an imperial power. These desires were present not only in European states such as the Balkans but in the Middle East and Asia as well. Powerful movements for political and social reform had existed prior to the war and would have to be addressed. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and revolutionary pressures in other countries, often brought to a head by the war, would similarly need to be confronted.

Before examining the specific aims or goals of these nations, however, certain background factors which influenced the participants should be appreciated. These were events or ideas that the participants could not control but which they had to be aware of in their decision making.

The Bolshevik Revolution had introduced a new political philosophy to Europe—one that challenged virtually every aspect of Western liberal civilization. There was real fear that **Bolshevism** was a “virus” that would spread and engulf much of Europe and perhaps beyond—fears were expressed in the United States and Canada about its presence there. The peacemakers would not only have to work to restore peace but would also have to try and address some of the grievances that might attract populations to the communist ideology.

**Bolshevism** A radical, revolutionary movement under the leadership of Lenin which seized power in Russia in 1917. It promoted an anti-capitalist philosophy and supported world revolution and class warfare.

Even before the Versailles Conference, the geo-political situation had changed dramatically. No fewer than three of the Great Powers who had been present in 1914 had collapsed and, in two cases, had dissolved into their constituent parts. In addition, the Ottoman Empire had dissolved and created a power vacuum in the Middle East. This was unprecedented and the assumption that the Great Powers who had begun the war would be present at the conclusion was unfounded. The nations making the decisions at Versailles were Britain, France and the United States.

The war itself was different from others, not only in size and destruction on many levels, but in its introduction of grandiose objectives. Terms like the “war to end all wars” and a war “to make the world safe for democracy” were new concepts. They may have been introduced to give some meaning to the catastrophic and often senseless slaughter on all fronts or to encourage the combatants to fight to the end. In any event, they introduced an idealistic tone and raised expectations about the peace that would be hard to satisfy.

The states that made the decisions at Versailles were all democratic nations, something not seen at previous conferences. It would mean that the leaders of these countries would be influenced in their actions by popular opinion at home or the need to fulfil political promises made during the war. Political leaders had engaged in extravagant rhetoric or promises to their populations to maintain support for a war that had seemed futile to many and for which enthusiasm was declining. The development of the mass media had allowed governments to produce extensive propaganda during the war, which often used inflammatory images and accounts of the enemy. These were designed to excite, enrage or encourage the population to maintain their dedication to the war effort. When the nations came to Versailles, the emotions that they had released among their populations would have to be satisfied in some way. This may well have played a role in the demands or positions that their leaders took. Modern technology made the reporting of the details of the conference to the national populations easy and immediate, adding another aspect to the work of the delegates—daily scrutiny and a relentless demand for information from reporters.

The other powerful influence on the aims and goals of the conference was the idealism of President Wilson and the Fourteen Points. This was an entirely new phenomenon in international conferences which, in the past, had dealt with pragmatic, concrete questions. Delegates were used to making changes to boundaries, levying indemnities and adjusting the balance of power in some way—exercises in **Realpolitik**. Wilson called for the creation of an entirely new system based on a new set of assumptions about how relations between nations were to be carried out. It assumed that war could be prevented entirely if people would just make the effort.

### Discussion point: Bolshevism



**What aspects of the Bolshevik Revolution caused it to be feared by Western countries?**

Describe the conditions of the working classes that prompted political leaders to fear that the revolution might spread.

A clear understanding of how Bolshevik philosophy and values clashed with traditional liberal Western values is important.

Bolshevism was described as a virus because it was seen to deny or destroy many aspects of contemporary Western institutions—social, economic, cultural and political.

**Realpolitik** An approach to international relations based on practical self-interest rather than moral or ideological considerations.



### Source analysis

A cartoon entitled “Peace, perfect peace” by David Low, first published in *The Bulletin* (Sydney) on 15 May 1919. The caption reads ‘Signor Orlando has returned to Paris, and the Big Four are in harmony again.’—Cable.”



### Questions

- 1 What message about the Paris Peace Conference is prompted by the cartoon?
- 2 What does it suggest about the ability of the conference to solve the world's problems?

### Activity:

#### The speeches and promises of the Allied leaders

Examine the political platforms or speeches of the Allied leaders prior to the Versailles Conference. An example would be British prime minister Lloyd George's platform during the election of December 1918.

- What promises did the leaders make to their populations or what expectations did they create through these speeches?
- Compare these promises with the positions that they took at Versailles.
- What evidence can be found of differences between the leaders' promises and their positions during the conference?
- What are some reasons for these differences?
- Were the public aware and how did they react? Discuss the impact of the development of the mass media—the instant reporting of events and decisions—and how this influenced public opinion.

## TOK link

### Integrating ways of knowing—emotion and reason

TOK is ideally placed to encourage internationalism and aims to embody many of the attributes in the learner profile that promote self-awareness, reflection, critical thinking, empathy, and a sense of responsibility. Emotions play a powerful role in determining thoughts and actions, and in shaping the pursuit of knowledge. Reason is the way in which people construct meaning and justify knowledge claims. How far do these qualities inform the actions of the peacemakers who created the treaties after the First World War?



**Why were President Wilson's Fourteen Points and other foreign policy ideas regarded as idealistic? What aspects of human nature did they seek to change?**

- 1 Explain what you understand by the term "idealism":
  - Is idealism mainly to do with emotion, or is it connected with our capacity for reason too?
  - Can we ever know anything purely through our emotions?
  - How do emotions interact with other ways of knowing such as reason, sense perception and language?
  - In what way can it be argued that idealism is both a positive and negative quality?
- 2 Examine Wilson's Fourteen Points and identify which specific points most reflect idealism, rather than reason? How and why?
- 3 Consider each of these linking questions to TOK in relation to the actions of Wilson and the other peacemakers in the post-war period:
  - What part does emotion play in the acquisition of knowledge?
  - Should emotion play a role in the evaluation of knowledge claims?
  - Does all knowledge require some kind of rational basis?

## Discussion point:

**What was different about the Versailles Conference compared to other peace conferences.**

Explain this in terms of the outcomes.

What similarities and differences can be seen between the aims, goals and methods of Versailles and those of the Congress of Vienna in 1815?

## Activity:

### Make a chart

On 8 January 1918, President Woodrow Wilson addressed the United States Congress outlining the Fourteen Points as the American terms for peace. Read through the points, and make a summary in chart form, as started below.

Divide the points up—individually or in groups—to report on compliance with the objectives stated and the proposed border agreements and principles of self-determination specified.

#### The 14 Points

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | Commitment to public diplomacy and declaration of agreements.     |
| 2 | Freedom of navigation on open seas (outside territorial borders). |
| 3 | Free trade. Removal of trade barriers.                            |
| 4 | Arms reduction.   |
|   |   |
|   |   |
|   |   |

## The aims of the participants

The aims of the Versailles Conference represented two fundamental and perhaps irreconcilable approaches. On the one hand, there was clearly a wish to develop a new order of international relations that would secure a permanent peace based on a genuine spirit of reconciliation and compromise. The goal in the words of one British diplomat was not merely to liquidate the war but to found a new order in Europe. We were preparing not only peace but permanent peace. Contradicting this idealism and generosity of spirit was a strong desire to punish those who had caused the conflict and to extract maximum compensation for their victims. Ultimately, the settlements were an awkward compromise between these conflicting emotions. Idealism and revenge were somehow to be reconciled in the same documents.

## The United States—Woodrow Wilson and the Fourteen Points

American goals were not expressed in traditional terms such as territorial acquisitions, indemnities (compensation payments) or restoring the balance of power. They were broadly expressed in the Fourteen Points, which were designed to create a peaceful world by removing what Wilson believed to be the reasons for war. President Wilson's goal was to establish democracy and **self-determination** and so eliminate many of the causes of war. This was an idealistic approach which often lacked specifics but which assumed the inherently peaceful and rational nature of human society. This was reflected in one of Wilson's most important goals: the **League of Nations**, which would be a forum for the reasonable and rational settlement of disputes.

Wilson's specific aims involved some punishment of Germany as the cause of the war and the establishment of a period of probation, after which Germany could be admitted to the League of Nations. Otherwise the Fourteen Points were the basis for negotiation with the other powers and for Wilson's goal of incorporating the establishment of the League in the Versailles settlements. He did not worry about details which might cause difficulty, as he felt that these could be ironed out later through the spirit of co-operation which the League would create.

## The United Kingdom

British aims fell into two categories. The first could be described as limited and representing traditional British foreign policy:

- the elimination of the German fleet as a threat to Great Britain and her empire
- the end of the German Empire as a potential source of conflict
- the defeat of German plans to establish control of Europe
- a return to normal European relations and trade that would restore the British economy and act as a bulwark against Bolshevism.

**Self-determination** The principle that countries should be established according to the wishes of the people concerned.

**League of Nations** An international organization created in 1919. It was designed to provide a method of resolving international tensions in a peaceful manner through the concept of collective security.

### Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924)

A distinguished academic, Woodrow Wilson became president of Princeton University in 1902. He was subsequently elected governor of New Jersey and then president of the United States in 1912. As president he oversaw the passage of many significant pieces of reform legislation which were in line with his progressive principles. He was re-elected for the presidency in 1916 and led the United States into the First World War. He drafted the Fourteen Points as a programme to end the war and design a better post-war world. As the principal architect of the Versailles settlements, he promoted the idea of the League of Nations. He was awarded the Nobel Peace prize in 1919. His efforts to involve the United States in the League of Nations failed to pass the US Senate and Wilson suffered a stroke which prevented him from contributing to further debate into post-war US policy.





In addition, the United Kingdom did not wish to get involved in any alliance or guarantee in Europe on behalf of any specific country. This was a traditional British policy, valuing freedom of action. British interest did not favour French territorial ambitions in Europe beyond the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine which might create a French threat to the balance of power. Great Britain and France had been rivals for centuries and only a common adversary had brought them together. The UK saw no need to support France in an attempt to dominate or control Europe; British interest lay in maintaining the balance of power and intervening only when this was threatened.

The second set of British aims were non-traditional and involved seeking a declaration of German war guilt and the requirement for Germany to pay extensive **reparations** far beyond the mere physical damage caused by the war. These goals were a response to popular emotions which had built up during the war about Germany as an aggressor and destroyer. They also reflect campaign promises made by Lloyd George in the December 1918 election.

## France

French aims must be understood in the light of fears about future security against Germany. Germany had been growing more powerful than France since the mid-19th century and the gap was getting wider as Germany possessed a larger population and greater industrial potential. France was convinced that it would not be able to defend itself if Germany returned to its pre-war strength. France had suffered over two million dead and wounded during the war. Northern France had been a major battle zone and had suffered enormous devastation of land, industry and housing. French goals were therefore to place as many restrictions on Germany as possible in order to reduce her power in the long term. The French sought to weaken Germany through clauses in the treaties which would require:

- extensive disarmament
- territorial reduction
- heavy reparations to weaken the German economy.

The French premier Georges Clemenceau wanted a partial dismemberment of Germany in order to remove any threat to France. In addition to recovering Alsace-Lorraine, he had ambitions to control Luxembourg and Belgium; he also wanted to make the area west of the Rhine a French puppet state. This would be a buffer against future German attacks. Finally, he wished to acquire the Saar region in western Germany as financial compensation for German

### Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929)

Georges Clemenceau was premier of France at the time of the Versailles peace negotiations. A strong right-wing nationalist, he served as a cabinet minister in the French government from 1902 until his appointment as premier in 1917. He opposed any talk of a peace settlement short of absolute victory and arrested politicians who wanted to negotiate peace in 1917. At Versailles he insisted on a harsh treaty of peace that would permanently cripple German power through territorial losses and economic penalties. He was unsuccessful as he clashed with Wilson and Lloyd-George, who wished to be more conciliatory. France did recover Alsace-Lorraine but failed in her attempts to seriously weaken Germany. Clemenceau's failures led to his loss of the 1920 election, after which he retired from politics.



**Reparations** Payments made by a defeated country to the victorious countries as compensation for war damages and punishment for aggression.

destruction. Above all, France wanted to have a firm alliance with the United Kingdom and the United States written into the peace settlements as a guarantee against further German aggression. France wanted concrete measures and was not interested in the vague guarantees offered by the League of Nations.

## Italy

Italy's aims were simply to achieve the territorial gains that had been promised in the Treaty of London. These included annexation of the Dalmatian coast, Trieste and South Tyrol. These regions were not necessarily populated by Italians but Italy had been promised them in return for entry into the First World War and expected the deal to be honoured. Broader concepts such as self-determination were not looked on favourably if these interfered with Italy's own territorial or economic goals. Italy was insistent on these aims and walked out of the conference when its rights to these territories were denied.

## Japan

Japan wanted recognition for its dominant position in China as well as possession of the former German territories in China and the Pacific. The Japanese were not in sympathy with self-determination but wished to acquire a larger empire for reasons of security and economic strength. Japan felt entitled to the former German possessions as it had captured them and saw them as a reward for contributing to the war effort. Another consideration was that Japan wished to take its place among the major powers. Acquiring an empire seemed to be a prerequisite to being respected as a major power in the world. In addition, Japan sought recognition through a statement recognizing racial equality in the peace settlements.

## Source analysis

The following documents relate to the aims of the participants in the Paris Peace Conference.

### Source A

*Woodrow Wilson had already revealed, in the Fourteen Points, what he wanted to see emerge out of the war—a Europe whose nationalities would rule themselves as open, democratic societies. Before the end of the war he had declared that the peace should show “no discrimination between those to whom we wish to be just and those to whom we do not wish to be just. It must be justice that plays no favourites ...” But any Germans who thought that Wilson’s “justice” meant that they would be treated generously were in for a shock. In the President’s eyes Germany had been wicked, and “justice” demanded that Germany be punished.*

**Source:** Howarth, T. 1993. *Twentieth Century World History: The world since 1900*. London, UK. Longman. p. 39.

### Question

Woodrow Wilson had often spoken about “peace without victory”. Is this reflected in the document? What may have caused him to change his mind?

### Source B

#### British aims

#### **Great Britain: a satisfied power?**

*In contrast to France, Britain, even before the great powers met in Paris, had already achieved many of its aims: the German fleet had surrendered, German trade rivalry was no longer a threat and Germany’s colonial empire was liquidated, while the German armies in Western Europe had been driven back into the Reich. Britain’s territorial ambitions lay in the Middle East, not Europe. In January*



1919 Lloyd George envisaged the preservation of a peaceful united Germany as a barrier against Bolshevism. Above all he wanted to avoid long-term British commitments on the continent of Europe and prevent the annexations of German minorities by the Poles or the French creating fresh areas of bitterness, which would sow the seeds of a new war. Inevitably, then, these objectives were fundamentally opposed to the French policy of securing definite guarantees against the German military revival either by negotiating a long-term Anglo-American military alliance or by a partial dismemberment of the German empire.

The logic of British policy pointed in the direction of a peace of reconciliation rather than revenge, but in two key areas, reparations and the question of German war guilt, Britain adopted a more intransigent line. Lloyd George and Clemenceau agreed in December 1918 that the Kaiser should be tried by an international tribunal for war crimes. Under pressure from the Dominions, who also wanted a share of reparations, the British Delegation at Paris was authorized to endeavour to secure from Germany the greatest possible indemnity she can pay consistently with the well being of the British Empire and the peace of the world without involving an army of occupation in Germany for its collection.

**Source:** Williamson, D. 2003. *War and Peace: International relations 1919–39*. 2nd edn. Tunbridge Wells, UK. Hodder Murray. p. 24.

### Question

Why could British aims be seen as moderate?

### Source C

#### French aims

Although the leaders of the three great Allied powers believed Germany was to blame for the war, they disagreed about what to do with her in defeat. The French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau, and the French people knew what they wanted to write into the treaty of peace—revenge, compensation for all they had suffered, and guarantees that a similar war would never happen again. For four years they had believed that the only good German was a dead German. Now they felt that the only safe Germany would be a crippled Germany, stripped of her wealth and most of her armed forces, and separated from France either by the creation of a new state between them or making sure that what remained of the German army stayed well away from the French border. In the east, a line of new states able to defend themselves would take care of any future German ambitions in that direction.

**Source:** Williamson, D. 2003. *War and Peace: International relations 1919–39*. 2nd edn. Tunbridge Wells, UK. Hodder Murray. p. 23.

### Questions

- 1 Identify French aims at the Versailles Conference.
- 2 How are these to be accomplished?

### Source D

#### Italian and Japanese aims

The aims of both Japan and Italy were concentrated on maximizing their war-time gains. Vittorio Orlando, the Italian Prime Minister, was anxious to convince the voters that Italy had done well out of the war, and concentrated initially on attempting to hold the Entente to their promises made in the Treaty of London, as well as demanding the port of Fiume in the Adriatic. Japan wanted recognition of its territorial gains. The Japanese Government also pushed hard, but ultimately unsuccessfully, to have a racial equality clause included in the Covenant of the League of Nations. It hoped that this would protect Japanese immigrants in America.

#### Japan's gains in the war

The war has presented Japan with opportunities to increase its power in China and the Pacific region at a time when the energies of the European Powers were absorbed in Europe. The Japanese declared war on Germany on 23 August. The British had originally intended that the Japanese navy should merely help with convoy duties in the Pacific, but the Japanese refused to be relegated to a minor role and, much to the alarm of Britain, Australia and the USA, proceeded to seize German territory in the Chinese province of Shantung as well as the German Pacific islands. In January 1915 the Japanese pushed their luck further and presented China with the Twenty-One Demands, which not only included the recognition of the Japanese claims to Shantung and southern Manchuria but also proposed that the Chinese government should appoint Japanese advisers. This last demand would have turned China into a Japanese protectorate and was only dropped after strong British and American objections. However, the rest of the demands were accepted by China in May 1915.

**Source:** Williamson, D. 2003. *War and Peace: International relations 1919–39*. 2nd edn. Tunbridge Wells, UK. Hodder Murray. p. 25.

### Questions

- 1 Identify the aims of Japan and Italy.
- 2 Who would oppose these claims?

## General issues for consideration

On top of their specific aims, all the powers represented at the Versailles Conference were expected to deal with a number of general questions.

### The treatment of Germany

This included issues involving Germany's colonies, her borders, disarmament, reparations and war guilt and the prosecution of individuals for war crimes.

### The Austro-Hungarian Empire

This had collapsed and a new political map was emerging in Eastern and Central Europe. How should the boundaries of these states be determined? How could provision be made for self-determination?

### The Ottoman Empire

What to do with the Middle East? How would the territory be divided up? How to resolve the conflict between Arabs and Jews?

### Russia

How could the dangers posed by the spread of Bolshevism be addressed and prevented?

### Non-European states

Representatives from various non-European states—including Vietnam, China and Japan—made representations for an end to colonialism and/or recognition of racial equality. These were largely ignored but the issues had to be addressed at some time in the conference.

## General ideas for change

The Fourteen Points had suggested that the Versailles Conference should champion a higher level of conduct that applied not only to international relations but also to politics, economics and social issues. The sacrifices made during the war had led many individuals to expect something better to emerge. Overall, it could be seen that Woodrow Wilson presented aims of an idealistic, long-term nature. These relied on the idea of human beings as being inherently peaceful, rational individuals who would work towards a peaceful world if given the opportunity.

This was in sharp contrast to the traditional attitudes of European diplomacy, which stated that peace was an unlikely occurrence and that one should always be prepared for the possibility of conflict. Rather than vague new ideas like **collective security** and the League of Nations, Europeans wanted specific alliances and agreements that would address the real issues that would undoubtedly arise in the future. This might be seen as a more cynical or pragmatic view, based on historical experience.

Wilson and others, however, condemned the old diplomatic practices as having been responsible for war and asked the world to strive for a

### Activity:

- 1 The aims of the European powers and Woodrow Wilson —as reflected in the Fourteen Points—were in sharp philosophical contrast. What were the most important differences between them?
- 2 Add a column to the chart created for the activity on p. 19 and head it "Aims of the European Powers". Identify the aims of the major powers when they arrived in Paris. Use the chart to identify potential points of friction or conflict.

new level of understanding and co-operation. Could humans embrace more altruistic principles or would they continue to rely on traditional power relationships and force? Should one trust the goodwill of others or buy a secure set of locks?

### German aims

Germany asked for an armistice in October 1918, based on the terms of Wilson's Fourteen Points and his speech of January 1917, the theme of which was "peace without victory". In this speech, Wilson expressed the view that reconciliation of the opposing sides would be necessary to prevent the outbreak of further wars.

Germany had not been defeated or invaded at the time that the armistice was requested and therefore could have expected some form of compromise peace under which neither side dominated. Germany would have expected to attend the peace negotiations as had happened at Vienna in 1815, following the Napoleonic wars. While some form of sanctions or territorial concessions might be expected, Germany would not have expected to be humiliated and severely punished. Kaiser Wilhelm II had abdicated and Germany had established a democratic republic. The Germans felt that this would help them gain sympathy especially from Wilson, who favoured democracy as a guarantee of peace.



**How does the experience of war affect a nation's approach to the peace process?**

What did Germany hope would be the outcome of the peace settlement?



## The terms of the Paris peace treaties, 1919–23

The terms of the Paris peace treaties are extensive and very detailed. The most important of the treaties is the one with Germany, which contained a number of controversial terms such as the war guilt clause, the territorial changes and the disarmament clauses. The other treaties dealt with the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires—breaking them up into new states and territories. The Sèvres treaty, which dealt with the Ottoman Empire, had its terms changed at Lausanne in 1923. It is important to note this and the reasons why.

The terms of the Paris peace treaties are subject to enormous debate. They are condemned as being either too harsh or too lenient, for hypocrisy in making deals which violated Wilsonian principles, for being naïve and unrealistic and for being the cause of the Second World War. A sound knowledge of the most important terms is crucial if one is to be able to participate effectively in the various controversies about the individual terms or the nature and impact of the peace settlements as a whole. Furthermore, comparing the terms to the aims of the participants will also give some insight into how the treaties were received in both the victorious and defeated countries.



## The five treaties

There are five treaties which make up the Paris peace settlements. The most well known is the Treaty of Versailles, which was the treaty that dealt with Germany specifically. There are four others—St Germain, Trianon, Neuilly, and Sèvres/Lausanne—which must also be studied as their terms have importance for the geo-political and economic future of Europe. Apart from the clauses that dealt with specific issues, each of the treaties of the Paris Peace Settlement incorporated the **Covenant of the League of Nations**.

The Treaty of Versailles, which was between Germany and the Allied and Associated Powers, was the focal point of the conference. It contained 440 clauses including the Covenant of the League of Nations. The terms are divided into a number of major categories: economic, military and territorial. The terms of the treaty were based on the acceptance by Germany and her allies of the **war guilt clause** (number 231 in the Treaty). This stated:

The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her Allies.

This statement justified all of the economic, territorial and military concessions, limitations and restrictions that Germany was forced to make and/or accept as stated in the treaty.

**Covenant of the League** The agreement, containing the principles on which the League was to operate that all nations signed when they joined the League of Nations.

**War guilt clause** This is article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles in which Germany agreed to accept full responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War.

## The issues arising from the terms of the Paris peace settlements

A number of points about the terms of the treaties should be noted:

- None of the defeated countries or Russia attended the Versailles Conference or took part in the discussions. All the major decisions were made by the United States, France, United Kingdom and Italy, who were known as the Council of Four.
- The treaties were the result of compromises in the aims of the major powers; these aims were often very contradictory and hostile, which led to difficult decisions and an imperfect document.
- The often stated view of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles was that they were not soft enough to allow for reconciliation with Germany but not harsh enough to cripple German power. This meant that when Germany recovered its strength, it would use this power to revise the treaty, perhaps through another major conflict.

### Germany's reaction

The Germans' reaction to the terms was based on their hopes and expectations, perhaps too optimistic, that the treaty would incorporate the spirit of the Fourteen Points and Germany would not suffer excessive punishment. They were very bitter when the treaty was presented, as they resented the war guilt clause as well as the

Summary of the peace settlements, 1919–23		
The main issues	The Versailles Settlement, June 1919	The Eastern European, Balkan and Near East peace settlements
<b>Problems</b> Revolutionary condition of Europe Russian civil war Diverging Allied aims Competing nationalism Desire for revenge Hunger, disease, economic chaos Allied lack of military strength as a result of demobilization  <b>Principles</b> Independence for subject nations International rule of law through the League of Nations Disarmament and reparation from defeated powers Determination to prove German war guilt Selective application of the 14 points	<b>Territorial changes</b> Independent Poland Plebiscites in Upper Silesia, Schleswig and West Prussia Alsace-Lorraine to France Saar administered by League of Nations Germany loses colonies and foreign investments  <b>Reparations</b> Reparation Commission fixes amount of 132 milliard gold marks in May 1921 Prolonged struggle to force Germany to pay, 1921–3 France occupies Ruhr in Jan 1923 Dawes Commission Jan 1924  <b>Disarmament</b> Abolition of conscription Regular German army of 100,000 Very small fleet Allied Control Commissions in Germany until 1927 Rhineland occupied for 15 years  <b>League of Nations</b> Collective security New principle of mandates Weakened by absence of USA Germany and defeated powers initially excluded	<b>St Germain</b> Czechoslovakia set up Slovenia, Bosnia, Dalmatia to Yugoslavia Istria, Trieste and S. Tyrol to Italy Galicia to Poland Austria not to integrate with Germany  <b>Trianon</b> Hungary loses 2/3 of its pre-war territory to Austria, Czechoslovakia and Romania  <b>Neuilly</b> Bulgaria loses territory to Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia  <b>Sèvres</b> Turks cede Middle East empire; Greeks gain Thrace; Straits controlled by Allies Revised at Lausanne, 1923: Greeks expelled, Constantinople back to Turkey  <b>Riga</b> Russia defeated by Poland, August 1920 Poland's eastern frontiers fixed by Treaty of Riga, March 1921

**Source:** Williamson, D. 2003. *War and Peace: International relations 1919–39*. 2nd edn. Tunbridge Wells, UK. Hodder Murray. p. 41.

fact that they had been given no real opportunity for discussion and were forced to sign it without any negotiation of the terms. This was a source of humiliation to Germany, who, as a Great Power, felt that it should have been treated with more consideration and not as a common criminal. The Germans could not accept what was seen as a **Diktat** and not as a genuine agreement.

The manner in which the treaty was presented and the statement of responsibility for the war were particularly resented. The reparations payments were objectionable, but perhaps more so were the territorial losses which saw the country divided into two parts. The denial of the principle of self-determination meant that ethnic Germans in Austria and Czechoslovakia could not become part of a greater German nation. Germany was excluded from the principle of self-determination, even though this was a pillar of Wilson's Fourteen Points, and had been applied to create other nations on the basis of their ethnic identities.

**Diktat** The German term for the Treaty of Versailles which they were forced to sign without being allowed to negotiate any of the details. This was an important factor in the anti-Versailles resentment of later years.

This German embitterment is compounded by the fact that Germany did not see herself as a defeated nation in November 1918. She had defeated Russia and her territory had not been invaded or conquered by Allied troops. In fact, the German army was occupying land in France and Belgium when the war ended—not the normal situation for a defeated power. Germany's banishment from the League of Nations was seen in Germany as a further insult to her status as a Great Power and contrasted poorly with the treatment given to Napoleonic France at the Congress of Vienna in 1815.

The terms were so objectionable that no future German government could accept them, and how to react to the Treaty became a matter of prolonged and bitter dispute. The Treaty of Versailles was rejected by the German population who wanted to see it revoked or revised. The argument in Germany was not whether the treaty should be revised but exactly how to do this. The extremists such as Adolf Hitler took one approach while moderate nationalists such as Gustav Stresemann took another. Nevertheless, the objective of all groups was the same—to find ways for Germany to escape the burdens and restrictions imposed by the treaty.

### Debate and criticism among the Allies

In the Allied countries, a vigorous debate arose over the terms of the Treaty and to what extent they were too harsh, too lenient or had failed to bring about the peaceful world envisaged by those who had embraced the Fourteen Points so enthusiastically. The importance of this debate is reflected in how willing the Allies would be to enforce the Treaty in the years to come. It would have to be enforced, as the Germans refused to accept it as a legitimate agreement and would therefore be trying to escape its limits at every opportunity. If all of the Allies could not agree, then the future international co-operation needed to enforce the treaty and operate the League of Nations would be in doubt.

The Allied criticism of the terms was first expressed by **John Maynard Keynes**, who wrote an attack on the Treaty as a **Carthaginian peace** based on a spirit of revenge, totally ignoring the economic consequences for Germany and Europe if the German economy were to be weakened by the Treaty. His view was that Europe would be poorer and more prone to another war as a result of the economic and territorial burdens placed on Germany. The Keynesian view has been disputed in recent years but at the time it helped form the basis of revisionist sentiment. As a result of his attack, people in Britain began to see the treaty as unjust and were prepared to recognize the need for adjustments to the terms which were unfair to Germany. This view was reflected as early as March 1919 by the prime minister, David Lloyd George, in his Fontainebleau memorandum on the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

**JM Keynes** A prominent British economist who wrote a book condemning the Versailles settlement as excessively punitive towards Germany and damaging to the recovery of European prosperity.

**Carthaginian peace** The extremely harsh treatment of a defeated power designed to permanently eliminate them as a future threat.

## Reaction of the United States

The most important reaction to the terms of the treaty may be that of the United States. The US senate refused to ratify it, based on their opposition to **Article X** of the League of Nations Covenant. This meant that the United States did not sign the Treaty of Versailles and therefore its role in the supervision and enforcement of the treaty evaporated. This had enormous implications for the enforcement of the treaty and the success of the League of Nations.

**Article X** An article from the Covenant of the League under which members of the League agreed to use their power to resist aggression wherever it might occur. This is also known as the collective security clause.

## The effect of the terms on Germany

Another significant aspect of the terms to consider is their actual effect on Germany. The short-term consequences may seem very severe, although there is historical debate on this point, and there is scope for further exploration as to how much Germany lost and to what extent her economy was damaged. It is important to understand the difference between the impacts of the First World War on the European economy and the impact of the Treaty of Versailles itself. Many of the problems would have occurred as a result of the collapse of empires, for example, regardless of the treaty.

In examining the treaties of St Germain, Trianon and the others, students may come to realize what many historians have noted: Germany was actually stronger after the war than before it. This somewhat surprising outcome is based on the realization that the disappearance of Austria–Hungary and the temporary collapse of Russia had altered the balance of power in the East. The new, small, weak states that had emerged on Germany's eastern border would not be able to restrain her if she chose to expand in that direction. The war and the treaty had created a power vacuum that a revisionist Germany might be tempted to fill. These new states also contained unhappy minority groups, who would prove to be a source of internal dissension.

## The Treaty of Rapallo

Another consequence of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles which saw Germany excluded from the League of Nations was the **Treaty of Rapallo** of 1922 between Germany and Soviet Russia. This allowed Germany to escape the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles and was a direct result not only of her resentment of the treaty but her exclusion, along with the Soviets, from the League. Her status as an outlaw further encouraged her to seek any means possible to evade the restrictions that had been placed on her.

**Treaty of Rapallo** A treaty signed in 1922 between Germany and the USSR. This was a treaty of mutual assistance that allowed the Germans to develop weapons in violation of the Versailles Treaty.

## Source analysis

The following documents relate to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

### Source A

#### Comments on the terms of the Versailles treaties

*The year 1919 was the high watermark of democracy in world history ... Still ... “the war to end war” turned out to be the harbinger of even greater disaster. World War I had shown that the balance of power did not exist any longer ... The failure to integrate Russia in some fashion into a European system created serious uncertainties ... that the Paris settlement did not become a world settlement was also owing to the withdrawal of the United States from Woodrow Wilson’s great design.*

HAJO HOLBORN

*The historian, with every justification, will come to the conclusion that we were very stupid men ... We arrived determined that a Peace of justice and wisdom should be negotiated: we left it conscious that the Treaties imposed upon our enemies were neither just nor wise ... the sanctimonious pharisaism [hypocritical self-righteousness of the authors] of the Treaties is their gravest fault.*

HAROLD NICOLSON

*The territorial settlement in Europe was by no means the wholesale, iniquitous, and cynical perversion of Wilson’s principles of self-determination which has been pictured.*

PAUL BIRDSALL

*... this treaty ignores the economic solidarity of Europe, and by aiming at the economic life of Germany it threatens the health and prosperity of the Allies themselves ... by making demands the execution of which is in the literal sense impossible, it stultifies itself and leaves Europe more unsettled than it found it.*

JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES

*Mr. Keynes ... predicted that in the next thirty years, Germany could not possibly be expected to pay more than two milliard marks a year in reparation. In the six years preceding September 1939, Germany, by Hitler’s showing, had spent each year on rearmament alone about seven times as much ... Now ... while the economic defects of that settlement were, for the most part, illusory or exaggerated, the present writer shares the opinion of those who have maintained that the political defects were the really decisive ones ... to put it shortly, in the failure, and one might also say, in the deliberate failure, to establish a true balance of power.*

ETIENNE MANTOUX

*... it is by the territorial settlements in Europe that the Treaties of 1919 and 1920 will finally be judged ... a fair judgment upon settlement, a simple explanation of how it arose, cannot leave the authors of the new map of Europe*

*under serious reproach. To an overwhelming extent the wishes of the various populations prevailed.*

WINSTON CHURCHILL

*... the Peace Treaties have created juster conditions throughout Europe, and we are entitled to expect that the tension between States and races will decrease.*

THOMAS MASARYK

*The Peace Conference, representing the democracies, reflected the mind of the age; it could not rise measurably above its source. That mind was dominated by a reactionary nostalgia and a traditional nationalism ... It was not so much the absence of justice from the Paris Peace Conference that caused the ultimate debacle; it was the failure to make the most of what justice there was.*

CHARLES SEYMOUR

**Source:** Lederer, I. 1960. *The Versailles Settlement*. Boston, USA: Heath and Co. p. xi.

### Source-based exercise

Take as your starting point any one of these statements, and provide an analysis of the point of view, and to what extent you agree with it. Refer to the terms of the treaties, along with the maps and statistics included in this chapter to support your argument.

### Source B

#### German reactions to the Terms of the Treaty

“Bloodshed and tears”.

##### Berlin, May 10

*At the sitting of the Prussian Diet held on Thursday the Prime Minister, Herr Hirsch, in a speech on the Peace conditions, declared: In these conditions there is no trace of a peace of understanding and justice. It is purely a peace of violence which for our Fatherland is thinly-veiled slavery, and out of which will result not peace for the whole of Europe, but merely further bloodshed and tears.*

**Source:** *The Times*, May 12, 1919, p. 14

Fritz Ernst recalls, in 1966, how he felt about the Treaty of Versailles in 1918:

*In our high school in Stuttgart, as indeed in most of the secondary schools in Germany after 1918, there was a noticeable rightist trend, which most of the teachers followed ... We believed it was a stab in the back that alone had prevented a German victory ... We did not know what the actual situation of the war had been in 1918; we were taught to hate the French and British and to despise the Americans.*





Erich Ludendorff's evidence to a Reichstag committee after the war:

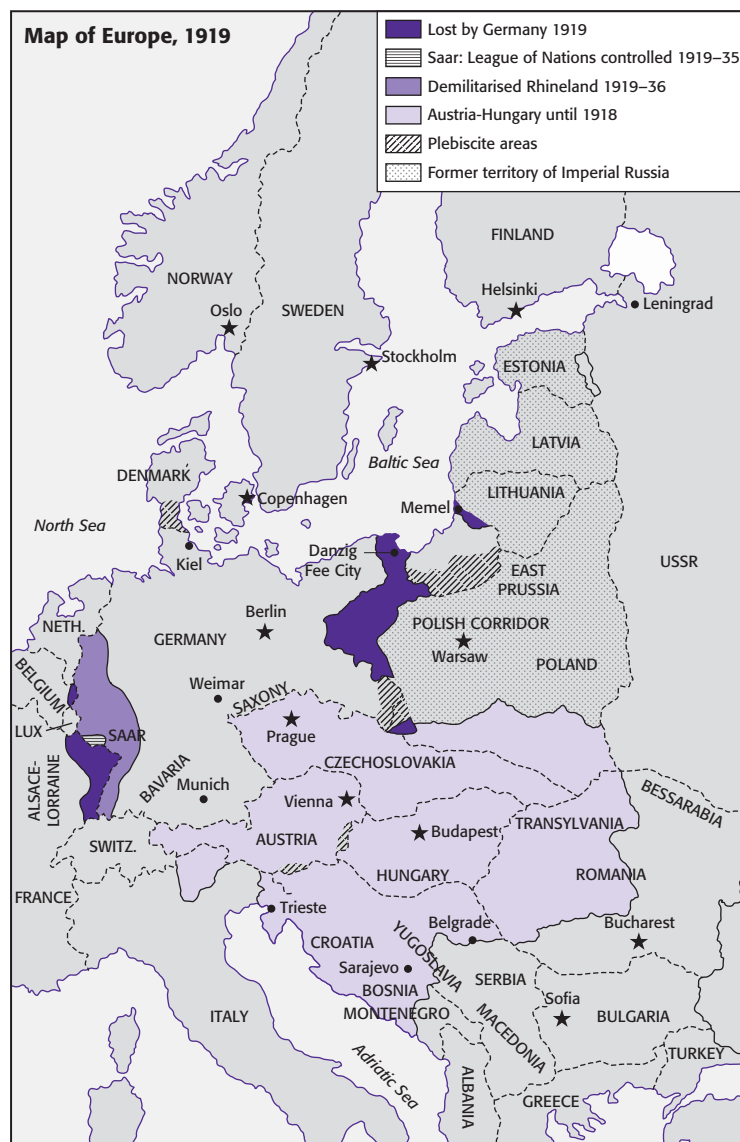
*The war was now lost ... After the way our troops on the Western Front had been used up, we had to count on being beaten back again and again. Our situation could only get worse, never better.*

The reaction of a German newspaper, *Deutsche Zeitung*, in June 1919:

*Vengeance! German nation! Today in the Hall of Mirrors [in the Palace of Versailles] the disgraceful Treaty is being signed. Do not forget it. The German people will, with unceasing work, press forward to reconquer the place among nations to which it is entitled. Then will come vengeance for the shame of 1919.*

**Source:** Radway, R. 2002. *Germany 1918–45*. London, UK. Hodder and Stoughton. p. 7.

## Source C



**Source:** Darby, G. 2007. *Hitler, appeasement and the road to War*. 2nd edn. London, UK. Hodder Murray. p. 12.

## Source-based questions

- 1 Identify the general German reaction to the Treaty, through analysis of sources B and C.
- 2 What evidence supports or refutes their attitudes?

## TOK link



**Do you agree with the statement of Kaiser Wilhelm II, that the “The war to end war has ended in a peace to end peace”?**

Do the terms of the treaties reflect idealism or practical goals?

Self-determination and nationalism were supposed to encourage future peace. To what extent did this happen?

## Discussion point:

### Opinions of the Versailles settlement

Select three different historians' views on the Versailles settlements. Explain their position and provide evidence to support it.

With reference to the origin and purpose of each of these sources, discuss its value and limitations.

## The impact of the treaties: Europe and the mandate system

The Treaty of Versailles had a distinct impact on the geo-political and economic situation of Europe after the First World War. The geo-political impacts were the creation of a number of new states in Central and Eastern Europe and the redrawing of the frontiers of Germany and France. The economic impacts were the weakening of the German economy through territorial loss and reparations and the destruction of the free trade zone in Eastern and Central Europe which had existed before 1914.

Beyond Europe, in the colonies of the defeated powers, the main impact of Versailles was the establishment of the mandate system. This was an attempt to make imperialism more progressive. The system did not in fact work and it ended up being a thinly disguised way to add territory to the empires of the victorious powers.

It is crucial to understand what geo-political changes the treaties did not make. The Bolshevik Revolution, the political weakening of Britain and France, the power of the United States, war debts and general economic weakness, among other problems, were caused by the First World War, not by the treaties. It is easy to become confused as to what changes resulted from the war and which were created by the actions of the peacemakers at Versailles.

### The impact of the First World War

The issues, attitudes and policies that developed during the period 1918–36 cannot be understood or appreciated without a sound knowledge of the experience and impact of the First World War on all those who participated in it. These experiences and impacts are often described as cataclysmic. To fully understand what that term means and the dimensions of those impacts on Western society, one must examine the experience of the war from a number of vantage points.

The war caused the deaths of millions of people—mostly in Europe and the Middle East. The dead were composed of soldiers and civilians who died from battle wounds, disease, starvation and ethnic conflict. What is most significant about these deaths is not only the sheer number but the manner in which they occurred. Soldiers on the Western Front died in millions in what can only be described as a strategic stalemate. After four years of war the battle lines had not shifted appreciably from the opening days of the war—the whole experience seemed to have been a futile orgy of mud and blood which had resolved nothing. This was a far cry from the romantic, chivalrous ideas of war that had existed in 1914 and that had seen huge crowds welcoming the onset of war as an opportunity for glory and adventure.

The collapse of these images had left a deep scar on the European psyche—optimism replaced by a deep pessimism reflected in a loss of faith in the values of the pre-war world, in the institutions and philosophies that had dominated the world before 1914. The number and manner of the deaths had left a huge scar. The introduction of new and terrible weapons of mass destruction such as poison gas, air

bombardment of civilians and ever more powerful armaments had created a vision of even more destructive wars in the future. The prospect of another Armageddon-like experience terrified Europeans and caused them to search desperately for alternatives to war—any alternative no matter how unlikely in practice.

This fear of war was not only based on physical destruction. The war had destroyed so much else that was familiar. The confidence and optimism of Europeans about their levels of education, progress and an ever-improving world had been shattered. How could a society at the peak of human development have allowed itself to engage in so mindless and brutal a conflict? Everywhere one looked in 1918—one could see evidence of a shattered world.

The political landscape had altered spectacularly with the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian, Russian, German and Ottoman empires. A look at the map of Europe in 1914 and in 1919 gives some idea of the enormous political changes that had occurred. There were not only a myriad of new countries but they had new political systems. The monarchy was out; republicanism was in. Even more disturbing to some Europeans was the fact that they had lost the leadership of the world to the United States whose troops had rescued the exhausted European armies in 1918 and whose economy was now the largest in the world. Added to this was the fact that the hopes for a better world were centred on the person of US President Woodrow Wilson.

Revolutionary political ideology had burst onto the scene through the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. This was an event that would not have transpired without the pressures created by the First World War. This was not merely a political revolution but a philosophical one as well. Bolshevism challenged the very pillars of Western society: religion, property, family, democracy and individualism. What was worse—it was threatening to spread and engulf Europe in a tide of revolutionary violence and anarchy. The war had unleashed this monster and another war might see further destructive ideas emerge.

Other major changes had taken place due to the war. The social structure of Western society had been transformed. Women in Western countries had received the vote and their role in the war had guaranteed that they would continue to demand changes to social and economic structures that would satisfy their demands for equal treatment. The war had been a “total war” that had not only called for intense physical effort from all sectors of society but had placed great emotional demands on it as well. This was the first mass media war in which governments unleashed masses of propaganda to raise the emotional commitment to the war—anger, revenge, vilification of the enemy were all widely expressed sentiments used to maintain the flow of recruits to the killing fields and to sustain the sacrifices demanded of the civilian populations. This near-hysterical campaign to support the war had considerable consequences. The harsh aspects of the Versailles Treaty can be traced back in part to the promises of revenge on the enemy made by politicians during the war. The moderation and consideration shown at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 could not be replicated at Versailles when so much emotion and expectation had been created.

It is easy to be cynical about the chances of success for the League of Nations and to mock those who believed in them. But the experience of the First World War convinced Europeans that another war would see the end of civilization and that any chance to avoid it should be embraced uncritically.

It is understandable therefore to comprehend why people felt that entirely new ideas and methods to resolve conflicts would have to be found and that humanity should rely on reason rather than strength to resolve disputes and maintain peace. A sense of interdependence and mutual support rather than rivalry and conflict was the only way forward that offered a chance to avoid another war. This helps to explain the over-optimism of the 1920s and the reluctance to confront the dictators in the 1930s: compromise was better than the alternative.

### Geo-political impacts of the treaties on Europe

The collapse of the Romanov, Hohenzollern and Hapsburg empires had allowed the creation of no fewer than ten successor states in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The Paris Peace Conference took on the task of defining the frontiers of these new states, ostensibly in accordance with the principle of self-determination—that countries should be established according to the wishes of the people concerned. This was a difficult problem as various nationalities did not always live in well-defined geographic areas but were scattered over a wide range of territories and/or intermingled with other racial or linguistic groups. This was the result of having lived in multinational empires in which people had some freedom to move around.

The most complex part of the problem was to create viable states in terms of economics, communications and security. It seemed logical that these states should be designed to be able to survive in the new world and this meant access to natural resources, trade routes, rivers and oceans. It is easy to see how this might complicate matters. Extending a country's borders to give it access to a trade route might mean incorporating some people from another ethnic group. This is clearly a violation of self-determination, but was judged necessary if the state were to be a viable economic entity.

There was no easy solution to this problem. Populations could have been relocated, but on humanitarian grounds as well as for more practical reasons this option was not taken up. The Allies asked the new nations to pledge to protect the rights of any minorities that remained within their borders. In addition to requiring a promise to protect minority rights, the peace conference provided a mechanism by which minorities could appeal to an international body for protection or redress. Minority groups could appeal to the League of Nations, which maintained a Minorities Commission—adjudication would be provided by the International Court of Justice. The effectiveness of these treaties varied greatly, but they were a step forward in emphasizing human rights.

The creation of these new states did not add to European stability but instead produced a number of small, vulnerable countries which often lacked political or economic stability. The manner in which they were constructed gave rise to internal tensions as well as

### Activity:

#### The geo-political/ economic impact of the peace treaties

- 1 Wilson believed that self-determination would lessen the chance of war. To what extent do you agree with this statement?
- 2 Take the role of an official given the task of drawing the boundaries of the new states. Explain what considerations you used when drawing the boundaries of Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

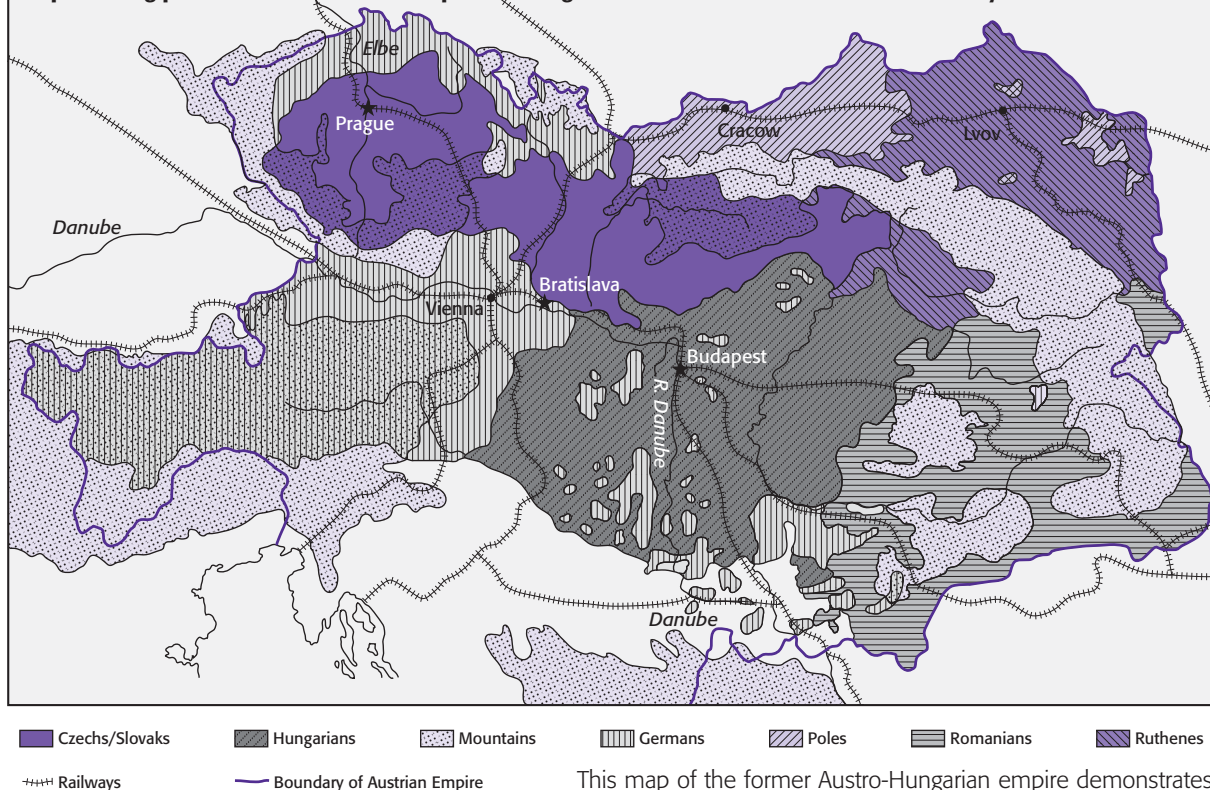


ongoing disputes with neighbouring states. The factors that led to the design of these states were numerous and complicated: ethnic, linguistic, cultural, strategic and historical factors all played a role. In addition, the aims and expectations of the Allies influenced the decisions on the frontiers of the new states.

Self-determination meant that a common language and ethnic background should decide the nature of the state. In practice, this principle was violated at Versailles in a number of cases, such as the South Tyrol, the **Polish Corridor** and the Sudetenland. There were also many cases where ethnic groups were so intermingled that it was impossible to separate them effectively. In practice this meant that about 30 million people ended up as minorities in other countries.

**Polish Corridor** A strip of territory forming part of the new Polish state created in the Versailles settlements. This territory divided Germany into two parts and fuelled German hatred of Versailles and Poland.

Map showing part of the old Austrian Empire showing the main nationalities, rivers and railways



This map of the former Austro-Hungarian empire demonstrates the difficulty of creating economically viable independent states while honouring the principle of self-determination.

### In place of Empires

*When their arms were not being twisted by Italians, Poles, Czechs and Greeks, the Big Three tried to deal sensibly with the rest of Europe. The trouble was that the continent's problems were too knotty to be unravelled quickly and to every one's satisfaction.*

*The principle of antional self-determination meant that new frontiers should be drawn according to the wishes of the people's concerned. But the people of Central and Eastern Europe did not all live in tight compartments labelled "Polish", or "Czech" or "Hungarian" or "Italian". There were places in which a few people of one nationality (for example, Hungarians) dominated a majority of, say, Romanians. One man's idea of a part of Poland could very*

*well be another man's idea of a part of Czechoslovakia. There was also the question of whether the frontiers proposed for a new state made military and economic sense. Surely, wherever possible, a country should have access to the sea or to a major navigable river? Surely it made military sense to draw lines on the map along "natural" boundaries such as rivers and mountain ranges? But what if, for example, by granting Czechs or Slovaks access to the River Danube, you included in their new state lands where most of the people were Hungarian? What kind of self-determination would that be?*

**Source:** Howarth, T. 1993. *Twentieth Century World History: The World since 1900*. London, UK. Longman. pp. 41–2.



The Allies had to make an assessment as to whether self-determination or economic/strategic viability should be the deciding factor in the design of the new states. There was little point to a nation being ethnically homogeneous if it could not survive. It was hoped that stable, democratic governments would be developed in these countries and it was realized that economic prosperity would be a key to this. It was this thinking that led to the creation of the Polish Corridor to give Poland access to the Baltic and the decision to make Danzig a free city to maximize opportunities for trade.

The problems for these new states began immediately. Their economic situation was particularly challenging. Before the First World War, the Austro-Hungarian Empire had been one economic unit. After the war this was destroyed and replaced by a group of small, fragile economic units scrambling to survive, erecting trade barriers and interrupting the normal flow of commerce that had existed for centuries. This is a problem that might have been addressed by the peace conference, as it was clearly not in keeping with the spirit of the third of the Fourteen Points which supported the removal of trade barriers.

Serious disputes broke out between those states which had lost key industries or access to resources. An example would be the dispute between Poland and Czechoslovakia over the Teschen area, which had large coal reserves and strategic rail connections.

The lack of economic and diplomatic co-operation among the new states not only made them prone to hostilities with each other but also rendered them weak and vulnerable to the territorial ambitions of either Germany or Russia in the future. Both of these were determined to revise the verdict of the First World War and the new small states would prove tempting targets. Their inability to work together to prevent the danger posed by Russia and Germany made their survival doubtful in the face of a strengthened USSR and Germany.

### **German empowerment**

The Treaty of Versailles—with all of the provisions designed to blame Germany for the war, to reduce her territory, to confiscate her colonies, to limit her military and to collect reparations—was deeply resented in all parts of German society. The humiliation of having to sign the treaty without benefit of any negotiation only heightened the sense of anger and humiliation felt by the vast majority of the German population.

The territorial terms meant that Germany lost 12 per cent of her population and 13 per cent of her pre-war territory. The most significant losses were Alsace-Lorraine, which was returned to France, and the territory taken to create the Polish Corridor, which divided Germany in two. A further humiliation was that Germans were not permitted to participate in the process of self-determination as the Allies forbade the incorporation of Germans outside Germany, in Austria and Czechoslovakia, into the Weimar Republic.

These losses and the sense of injustice felt by many Germans meant that they were determined to seek a revision of the treaty at the earliest opportunity. The fact that the countries on her eastern border were weak and, in fact, represented a power vacuum would prove a

powerful temptation for Germany when she had recovered her strength. The irony of the First World War was that although Germany had been defeated, she was actually in a stronger position than she had been before the war, particularly in the east. The Great Powers that might have restrained her were gone, replaced by a power vacuum.

### Soviet revisionism

A significant development at this time, not created by the Treaty of Versailles, was the emergence of the Bolshevik regime in Russia. Immediately after the war, Russia was weakened by the effects of political revolution and civil war. As such, she did not pose an immediate threat to the new states of Eastern Europe which might be seen as a buffer against the spread of Bolshevism virus. In fact, Russia had been defeated in a war with Poland and had lost considerable territory as a result. When Russia recovered her strength, however, she, like Germany, would very likely seek a revision of the verdict of the First World War and her target would be the newly created states. Their weakness and inability to co-operate with each other would make them a target for Soviet revisionism.

The new states and their relationship with Germany and Russia was a little like the old saying “while the cat’s away, the mice will play”. When the cats returned, however, the mice would be in dire straits. Any doubt about the hostility of Germany and Russia to the new states was erased by their co-operation in the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922. This treaty, which would serve to undermine the restrictions of Versailles and restore the strength of these two nations, made it clear that they were determined to revise the territorial arrangements of Versailles.

### The Little Entente, 1921

A number of the new states, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania, were aware of their vulnerability and formed the **Little Entente** in 1921. Its original intention was to protect them from the **irredentist** claims of Hungary, which was angry about the territorial losses that she had suffered through the treaties. The Little Entente was a model of co-operation, particularly military and economic, among its members. If it had expanded, it might well have strengthened the whole region and made it less vulnerable to the revisionist ambitions of Germany and Russia. However, as will be seen, rivalry and hostility among other new states prevented this development.

The alliance was supported by France, which was seeking a counterweight to the possibility of a German resurgence. The loss of Russia as an ally had forced the French to seek another way to balance German power and discourage their aggression by creating the prospect of a two-front war. In line with this policy, France made an alliance with Poland in 1921.

Poland was the most powerful of the new states and would have been an important addition to the Little Entente, but her ongoing hostility towards Czechoslovakia over **Teschen** made this impossible. This was an example of how the disputes which occurred when the new states were formed made it difficult for them to co-operate for their mutual benefit or protection.

**Little Entente** An alliance of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania in 1921 to safeguard their new independence from other central European states such as Bulgaria and Poland. France tried to develop this into a counter-balance to German power.

**Irredentism** A desire to recover former territory.

**Teschen** was an area of rich mineral resources claimed by both Poland and Czechoslovakia. They had engaged in hostilities over it in 1918. This dispute poisoned the relationship between the two countries throughout the inter-war period.

## Source analysis

The following documents relate to Russia and Germany and the Treaty of Rapallo.

### Source A

#### Weimar attitudes towards Soviet Russia

Dr Walter Simon, Foreign Minister of the Weimar Republic, in a speech to the Reichstag, 26 July 1920.

*I am not as worried about Eastern developments as perhaps many of you are. I came to know Chicherin at Brest-Litovsk and I regard him as an unusually clever man. I do not believe it is in the interest of the Soviet Republic to overrun Germany with murdering and burning hordes. What the Soviet Republic needs is economic aid. It has robbed itself of a large part of its economic strength by an excessive emphasis on the Soviet idea which would have made the reconstruction of the ruined economic system possible. I do not belong among those who see nothing but chaos in Russia. I know from reports of independent and knowledgeable men that a truly enormous creative work has been accomplished, a work which in many respects we could do well to take as an example. I am prepared and willing to give you the evidence.*

### Source B

#### Treaty of Rapallo

Extract from the Treaty of Rapallo, 16 April 1922.

##### Article 1

*(a) The German Reich and the Russian Socialist Federal Republic mutually agree to waive their claims for compensation for expenditure incurred on account of the war, and also for war damages, that is to say, any damages ... on account of military measures, including all reparations in enemy country. Both parties likewise agree to forgo compensation for any civilian damages. ...*

*b) The public and private legal relations between the two states ... will be settled on the basis of reciprocity.*

*Article 3 Diplomatic and consular relations will immediately be resumed. ...*

*Article 4 Both Governments have furthermore agreed that ... the general regulations of mutual, commercial and economic relations shall be effected on the principle of the most favoured nations. ...*

*Article 5 The two Governments shall co-operate in a spirit of mutual goodwill in meeting the economic needs of both countries. ... The German Government, having lately been informed of the proposed agreements of private firms, declares its readiness to give all possible support to these arrangements.*

### Source C

#### Soviet reassurance to France over the Treaty of Rapallo

Extract from a letter from Chicherin to the French foreign minister on the Treaty of Rapallo, 29 April 1922.

*In the statements of French Government leaders, the treaty between Germany and Russia ... signed at Rapallo is regarded as an act directed against French interests. The assumption has frequently been made that secret clauses of a military and political character ... are attached to the treaty of Rapallo.*

*The Russian Delegation declare in the most categorical terms that the Treaty of Rapallo does not contain a single secret clause, military or political, and that the Russian Government is not a party to any act the operation of which is directed against the interests of France or of any other nation.*

*The Treaty of Rapallo has no other object than the settlement of questions which have accumulated between two States which were at war with one another and which feel the mutual necessity of re-establishing peaceful relations ...*

*In this respect, Russia's policy remains unchanged, notwithstanding the hostility which France has thought it necessary to show in regard to Russia in the last four years.*

### Source D

#### German proposals to partition Poland after Rapallo

General von Seeckt, in proposals to Reichswehr leaders, 11 September 1922.

*Poland's existence is intolerable, incompatible with the survival of Germany. It must disappear, and it will disappear through its own internal weakness and through Russia—with our assistance. For Russia, Poland is even more intolerable than for us; no Russian can allow Poland to exist ... Poland can never offer any advantages to Germany, either economically, because it is incapable of any development, or politically, because it is France's vassal. The re-establishment of the broad common frontier between Russia and Germany is the precondition for the regaining of strength of both countries ...*

*We aim at two things: first, a strengthening of Russia in the economic and political, thus also in the military field, and so indirectly a strengthening of ourselves, by strengthening a possible ally of the future ... and by helping to create in Russia an armaments industry which in case of need will serve us.*



## Source E

### The shape of the future in the Treaty of Rapallo

*The revisionist powers were not only deficient in force, but separated by differences of policy, interest and outlook too wide to permit of the formation of an opposing group. But there were dangerous possibilities for the future. The normal tendency towards a reversal of combinations after a great war in itself suggested an ultimate rapprochement between Russia, Germany and Italy: the first two had fluttered the doves of Europe as early as 1922 by the conclusion of the Treaty of Rapallo, whilst the opposition between France and Italy was becoming increasingly acute, and the dissatisfaction of the latter at her treatment during the Peace Conference tended inevitably to bring her into the revisionist camp. With each reconciliation of existing differences between these three Powers, and with the ultimately inevitable recovery of Germany, a situation could therefore be seen approaching in which the worst features of the pre-war system might easily be reproduced.*

**Source:** Rayner, EG. 1992. *The Great Dictators*. London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton Murray, pp. 12–15.

## Source-based questions

- 1 **a** Identify the reasons given in Source A why the USSR is not a danger to Germany.
- b** What is the author's purpose?
- 2 Compare and contrast the reasons for signing the Treaty given in Sources A, B and D.
- 3 With reference to their origin and purpose, evaluate the value and limitation of Sources C and D for a historian studying the Rapallo treaty.
- 4 Using these documents and your own knowledge, explain the impact of Rapallo on the geo-political settlement created at Versailles.

## Economic impacts

In economic terms, the Treaty of Versailles affected the European economic situation more by what it did not do than by what it did. It did not deal with any economic question directly except that of reparations. Most critically, it failed to deal with the issue of Allied war debts. This created bad relations among the debtor nations and the United States for many years and contributed to general economic instability as nations struggled to pay off their loans. The debt issue created pressures which contributed to the **Ruhr** Crisis in Germany and the poisoning of relations between France and Britain. A number of international conferences tried to resolve the debt issue as a means of alleviating tensions over reparations and assisting in economic recovery. They were all unsuccessful, as the United States refused to cancel the debts of its Allies, thus weakening their recovery and forcing them to continue to demand reparations from Germany. The irony is that the United States was compelled to offer financial aid to Germany through the **Dawes Plan** in the aftermath of the Ruhr Crisis. This might have been averted to some extent if they had addressed the Allied debt issue earlier.

The economic terms of the Treaty were condemned by JM Keynes, who argued that demanding high reparations from Germany, along with the loss of territory and resources, was a foolish decision. It would hurt all of Europe as it would prevent the recovery of Germany, which was the economic engine of Europe. The Allies, in punishing Germany, were only punishing themselves. The Keynes view has been challenged by other historians but it had considerable support in the post-war period and contributed to the call for the revision of the Treaty. Considerable sympathy developed in Britain and the United States for German requests to revise the

**Ruhr** The centre of German heavy industry. It was occupied by France and Belgium in 1923 to force Germany to pay reparations.

**Dawes Plan** This was created by the United States in order to restore economic and political stability to Germany. America would lend money to Germany to rebuild industry and pay her reparations to Britain and France.

treaty and the reparations payments. This led to a serious rift between the UK and France over the treatment of Germany.

The treaty also failed to develop any effective organization to promote and ensure international trade, particularly among the newly created European states. This failure to develop stronger trading links would add to the catastrophic impact of the Great Depression of 1929.

## The establishment and impact of the mandate system

Many people believed that colonial disputes had been a major cause of the First World War. Woodrow Wilson addressed this concern in the fifth of the Fourteen Points, which proposed:

a free, open-minded and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.

Liberal opinion in Europe and America as personified by Wilson would not permit the victors simply to annex the colonies of Germany and the Ottoman Empire.

This meant that instead of merely distributing the colonies of the defeated powers as spoils of war, the decision was to create the mandatory system to administer them. The administration of these territories would be supervised by the League of Nations. The mandates were given to the countries which had conquered them from the Germans and Ottomans in accordance with Article 22 of the League Covenant. This states that the purpose of the mandate system was the well-being and development of the people in these territories. The League was also charged with ensuring that slavery did not occur in these territories and that an open door for trade would be maintained. The proponents of this system saw it as a vehicle to educate and improve colonial populations, with the intention of the territories becoming independent democratic states.

The territories were divided into three classes of mandate, depending on their degree of development and how soon they would be ready for independent status:

- The “A mandates” were those countries which would be ready for independence in the very near future. These comprised the former Ottoman states in the Middle East: Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq
- The “B mandates” were less advanced and had no immediate prospects for independence. These comprised the German colonies in Africa, which were divided between France, Britain and Belgium
- The “C mandates” were thinly populated and economically underdeveloped. They were handed over directly to the nations that had conquered them. This meant that German possessions in the Pacific were distributed between Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Southwest Africa was given to South Africa.



The mandate system was devised at Versailles but the actual decisions on how to divide German territory had been made prior to the conference. Documents such as the Sykes–Picot Agreement between the United Kingdom and France in 1916 had divided the Ottoman possessions between these two powers.

The mandate system seems like a thinly disguised form of territorial annexation. The Japanese in particular annexed and fortified their Pacific island mandates, in clear violation of the terms of the mandate agreement. The impact on the people in the territories was minimal and they were treated in the same way as other colonial populations. Racial equality and progress toward independence were discussed, but little or no real effect was given to these concepts. However, it should be noted that, for the first time, a system of accountability was introduced. This created the idea that colonial powers had specific responsibilities to their subject peoples and that their actions could be scrutinized by an international body.

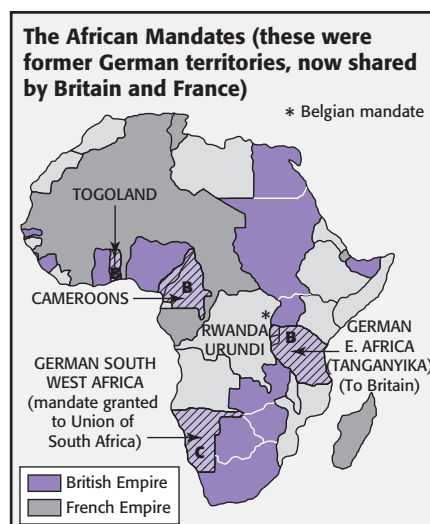
The allocation of mandates gave rise to a number of controversies. The majority of the mandates went to the UK and France, victors in the war and already in possession of the world's largest empires. This was particularly galling to the Germans, who lost everything, and the Italians, who received nothing despite being on the winning side. It further embittered the Italians about the Versailles settlement, lent support to the nationalist movements led by Mussolini and contributed to Italy's determination to acquire territory outside Europe.

Another major area of controversy caused by the mandate system was the Middle East. The Arabs in the Middle East who had helped the UK defeat the Ottoman Empire had hoped for land and independent status. The British and French, however, had already decided to divide the area between them according to the Sykes–Picot Agreement. Their use of the mandate system gave them control of the Middle East after the war—control that was sanctioned through the League of Nations. This infuriated the Arab population and led to a number of uprisings in the post-war period against both the British and the French.

A further controversy was created by the British decision to proceed with the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which had given British support for a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine.



**What was different about the mandate system in comparison to previous wars, following which the victors simply annexed the territory of the losers?**



**Source:** Catchpole, B. 1983. *A Map History of the Modern World*. Toronto, Canada. Irwin. p. 33.

## Enforcement of the terms of the treaties

The lack of enforcement of the Versailles treaties raised as many questions as the terms themselves. The United Kingdom and the United States showed little enthusiasm for the Treaty of Versailles after it was signed and consequently had little desire to enforce its provisions. They were influenced by their traditional isolationism and the fact that revisionist views of the treaties' harshness were already circulating. Consequently, the French lost the much desired Anglo-American Guarantee and were left to try and enforce the treaty alone—beyond their ability. The failure of enforcement allowed Germany to begin to evade the Treaty and plan its overthrow at the earliest possible moment.

The disarmament conferences that were organized after the war in the spirit of the Fourteen Points were largely unsuccessful due to a lack of co-operation and a failure to resolve the issues that supported expanded arms programs, particularly in the 1930s.

### US isolationism

The roots of US isolationism run very deeply in the American tradition. They go back to the time of George Washington's presidency, when he counselled the nations to avoid foreign entanglements, and to the advice of Thomas Paine who wrote that Europe was too thickly planted with kingdoms to be long at peace. Over the years many people had come to the United States of America to escape Europe and its conflicts. The physical separation of North America from Europe had created an enormous psychological barrier as well. Part of the American ideology was that it was a better society than the European states, and should remain aloof and uncorrupted. The United States had a hemispheric mentality, as demonstrated by the **Monroe Doctrine** and her ideas of Manifest Destiny. The purpose of these was to give control of the western hemisphere to the United States but to exclude all foreign influences as far as possible. In addition, the United States did not maintain large armed forces in peacetime and showed little inclination to intervene outside its own areas of interest.

At the end of the First World War, the United States was the wealthiest and most powerful economic entity in the world. All Allied nations were in debt to her financially and her armed forces had proven decisive in ending the war on the western front in favour of the Allies. Woodrow Wilson, the president of the United States, saw this new chapter in American intervention as providing an opportunity to change the way in which international relations were conducted and to prevent further wars.

Wilson had used phrases such as "making the world safe for democracy" as rallying cries for his country's involvement in the First World War and he now sought to make such sentiments a reality. His ideas, as expressed in the Fourteen Points and in the concept of a League of Nations, were the methods that he thought would inspire

**The Monroe Doctrine** was an attempt to prevent any foreign presence in the Western hemisphere beyond that already established by 1823 when the doctrine was announced. In later years it was extended to give the United States the right to interfere in the internal affairs of nations in the Western hemisphere.

and create a new international order. American involvement would be critical and would allow the United States to become the leader in the creation of a new, more peaceful and progressive system of international relations. This would be very much in line with American views of themselves as a utopian society acting as an inspiration to the rest of the world.

However, in spite of a massive effort to promote the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles, the United States did not ratify (formally accept) the Treaty and, therefore, did not join the League. The effort at ratification, and the stress and fatigue involved in the campaign, cost Wilson his life. The reasons for the failure of his efforts are reflected in the comments of Margaret MacMillan:

The Americans had a complicated attitude towards the Europeans: a mixture of admiration for their past accomplishments, a conviction that the allies would have been lost without the United States and a suspicion that, if the Americans were not careful, the wily Europeans would pull them into their toils again.

Macmillan, M. 2001. *Paris 1919*. London, UK. Murray. p. 14.

The US Congress could not reach agreement on the Treaty and the Covenant of the League. The Treaty would have required that the US Senate vote in favour by a two-thirds majority and this proved impossible to achieve. There was no consensus on America's role in the world. Some individuals wanted the United States to return to a traditional policy of isolation and do no more than act as beacon of liberty and progress. Others believed that the United States had a responsibility to participate in world affairs and help to influence their direction in the future. But they could not accept the Covenant of the League of Nations and, specifically, Article X, which would have compelled the United States to take part in matters in which she had no interest.

The other aspect is that the ratification of the treaty became a matter of political partisanship within the United States between Democrats and Republicans, with Wilson being opposed by the Republican leader of the Senate, Henry Cabot Lodge. The Republicans had not been included in the Versailles delegation and this partisan behaviour by Wilson may have doomed his efforts, as he remained adamant and unwilling to compromise with his political rivals on the terms of the Treaty. The result of the failure to ratify was that the United States did not become a member of the League of Nations. In addition, the United States did not ratify the **Anglo-American Guarantee**, made to ensure French security in case of a German attack. These decisions, along with the election of a Republican, Warren Harding, as president in 1921, whose slogan was a "return to normalcy", signalled that the United States was returning to its traditional policy of isolationism.

#### **Anglo-American Guarantee**

A proposed treaty proposed after the First World War in which the United States and Britain would guarantee to defend France against German aggression. It was not ratified by the United States Senate and thus never came into force.

### **The Anglo-American Guarantee**

The Versailles Conference had encountered several roadblocks in reaching a settlement with respect to Germany because of the rigid views of France. The French were obsessed with their future security against another German attack and were proposing a partial dismemberment of Germany in order to achieve this. Specifically, the

French wished to detach the Rhineland area from Germany and create an independent state that would be neutral and/or under French influence.

Wilson could not support the French position and neither could Lloyd George, but they realized that the French would stand firm unless they received a firm guarantee of military support from the USA and the UK in the event of German attack. On 28 June 1919, the Anglo-French agreement was signed. Both countries pledged to come to the aid of France if she were attacked by Germany. This agreement was not in sympathy with Wilson's views that such guarantees would be unnecessary as a result of the creation of the League, but he had no choice as the French would have created great difficulties in other areas if the issue had not been resolved. Unfortunately for France, the Anglo-American Guarantee that they had sought was never ratified by the US Senate and thus never came into force. As a result of the US failure to ratify, the British also withdrew from any military commitment to France.

## British isolationism

This British action should be understood in light of traditional British foreign policy. The British through their history were also isolationists, who avoided firm commitments to other nations, particularly in peacetime. This was not the same type of isolationism as practised by the United States but rather was an active isolationism. The British were ready to intervene in European affairs but wanted to retain their freedom of action to intervene elsewhere when and where they felt best suited their needs. British policy was always to intervene against any power seeking the hegemony (dominance) of Europe and as such they refused to tie themselves to any one country or group of countries.

There was a fear in the UK after the war that France might try to achieve dominance in Europe. There was also a reluctance to support France as she might become embroiled in a war with Germany. The likeliness of this was due to French support of Poland and the countries of the Little Entente, who might find themselves in conflict with a revisionist Germany. The sense that Germany had been too harshly treated at Versailles was growing and the British were not prepared to go to war to defend an unfair settlement or place herself in a position where she might have to defend an unpopular treaty.

Furthermore, the United Kingdom—similar to many other countries after the First World War—wanted to limit the chance that she would be involved in any kind of conflict. The prospect was simply unacceptable to the population after the horrors of the war.



**What are the implications of the cancellation of the Anglo-American Guarantee to the enforcement of the Treaty of Versailles?**



### Discussion point:

**Could the Anglo-American Guarantee have prevented another war?**

Explain the most important historical reasons for US isolationism.

**Activity:****Debate on the Treaty of Versailles**

- 1 Conduct a debate on the Treaty of Versailles that pits the position of Wilson against his opponents.
- 2 Conduct a debate on the resolution that “A peaceful post-war world depended entirely on the continued involvement of the USA in world affairs and organizations.”

**IB Learner Profile link****Principled**

There are differences in the way nations and individuals see their role and responsibility in the world. What encourages us to intervene in international crises?



**What are the motives that encourage either individuals or nations to make sacrifices in defence of a principle or to correct a wrong?**

Consider the following questions:

- Why was it possible for American idealists to reject the Versailles settlements?
- What human motives might be involved in the decisions to support or reject the Versailles settlements?
- Do nations always base their actions on self-interest? Do individuals?

**Disarmament****The Washington Naval Conference and the Far East**

The arms race had been identified as one of the major contributors to the outbreak of the First World War and as such was targeted by Wilson in the Fourteen Points. It was a goal of the Paris settlements and the League of Nations that progress be made towards reducing armaments to limit the threat of war. Ironically it was the United States who did not sign the Versailles treaty and who did not join the League that organized the most successful disarmament conference of the post-war period.

After the First World War, the arms race continued in the naval arena, as the United States, United Kingdom and Japan were investing large sums of money to expand their fleets. This naval race had been caused by a combination of the American desire to have a “fleet second to none”, the British tradition of having the world’s largest fleet as a matter of security and the Japanese desire to defend herself and her new empire and to increase her international stature and prestige.

The decision to call a conference to address the naval arms race was based on two major issues: the cost of the arms race which neither the UK nor Japan could afford and an American desire to spend less on arms according to her traditional policy. The other major factor for the conference to address was the need to defuse the increasing tension between Japan and the USA in Asia and the prospect that this might become a major conflict involving other countries.



Japan and the United States had been suspicious of each other's intentions in China and the Far East for a number of years and the situation had become more difficult after the war, as the Japanese had expanded their territory and sought to further dominate China, to the possible exclusion of other countries and their trade relations. The loss of trade and the possible threat to US possessions in the Philippines were issues that were increasing tensions and the talk of war between the two was becoming more common. Japan felt threatened by the US naval build-up and the reluctance of the United States to recognize her position in Asia.

This was of particular concern to the UK, who had had a defensive alliance with Japan since 1902 and who might find herself dragged into a USA–Japan war on the side of Japan. Such a prospect, while seeming remote, was enough to encourage the UK to support the naval disarmament conference and a resolution of tensions in the Far East. In addition, the UK was under pressure from Canada and Australia to end the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in order to avoid a confrontation with America.

The Washington Conference (1921–2) was the most successful of the post-war disarmament conferences, though its successes were limited and not permanent. That is typical of all post-war disarmament conferences, which produced very limited and usually short-term results. The most critical point to make about disarmament conferences is that they cannot succeed in a vacuum. The reasons for arms races have to be addressed before disarmament can take place. In a world where many nations had grievances or territorial ambitions and distrusted their neighbours, disarmament would have little chance of making progress. Many nations—for example, Germany, Russia, Japan, Italy—would see rearmament as the only way to redress their grievances. Believing that disarmament could take place under such circumstances was probably foolish and may have encouraged aggression rather than prevented it.



**What issues would have had to be resolved in order to make disarmament a possibility?**

.....

### The Washington agreements

The most important agreement was the decision to limit the size and number of the battleships in their fleets as well as limiting the size of cruisers and aircraft carriers. Of particular importance was the fact that they agreed to maintain a constant ratio of naval armament for the USA, UK and Japan of 5:5:3. All nations were to destroy battleships until the maximum fleet size permitted was reached. In addition, no new battleships were to be constructed for ten years. The agreement also limited the construction of bases in the Pacific, which succeeded in reducing the possibility of conflict and gave Japan dominant influence in the eastern Pacific as neither the USA nor the UK could establish new bases there.

The success of the conference was that it did result in the destruction of weapons and place limits on future armament. It was a beginning to the process of further disarmament negotiations which would cover other types of weapons.

The weapons reduction took place because the underlying political issues that had spurred the arms race were also settled. Two agreements were signed—the Four Power Agreement and the Nine Power Agreement—which were designed to reduce tensions in the Far East and limit the possibility of conflict.

- The Four Power Agreement involved the USA, Japan, the United Kingdom and France. This agreement replaced the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and guaranteed the rights of all the signatories to their possessions in Asia. They agreed to defend each other in the event of external attack.
- The Nine Power Agreement confirmed the Open Door for trade in China and guaranteed its territorial integrity. This agreement collapsed with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931.

The conference was not perfect but was embraced by the public as an example of progress towards peace and by the nations concerned as they all achieved some benefit, strategic and/or financial.

The United Kingdom avoided a ruinous naval race that it could not afford after the First World War but which the British had felt compelled to enter, with serious implications for her domestic economy. The UK also dissolved the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, thus removing a source of friction with the United States. This was done without giving offence to Japan, who had been very attached to the alliance and might have reacted badly to a British desire to end it.

Japan, although seemingly irritated by the fact that she had a smaller fleet than the USA or the UK, actually benefited the most from the conference. The Japanese avoided an expensive naval race but gained tremendous security as no new American or British bases could be established within 3000 miles (4800 km) of Japan's borders. This gave her complete control of the eastern Pacific and China in the event of any future disputes.

The United States was able to reduce armaments spending, in line with the decision to retreat into isolation, and was able to reduce the possibilities of friction in the Pacific at least for the immediate future.

These agreements depended entirely on the co-operation of the parties involved, as they lacked any enforcement provisions. They were successful because the nations involved all felt that they had achieved a positive result and because the small number of participants made it easier to reach agreement. The timing was also beneficial as there was great public interest and support for the cause of disarmament in the years immediately following the First World War. The agreements were very vaguely worded and might easily be ignored if one or more nations found themselves in changed circumstances where the agreements no longer served their best interests. This situation would occur in the case of Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931.

An important point to note is that the agreements failed to include two major powers: Germany and Russia. Both these nations would be interested in increasing their armaments and military strength in the future, which would prove a challenge to the entire concept of disarmament.

## The London Naval Conference

The London Naval Conference of 1930 was the third in a series of meetings whose purpose was to reduce the naval armaments of the major powers. The first meeting had been the Washington Conference in 1921, which had limited the number and size of capital ships. Another conference in Geneva in 1927 had proved unable to reach an agreement. In 1930 the five major naval powers—the USA, the UK, Japan, Italy and France—met in London to revise and extend the agreement reached in 1922 in Washington.

This treaty made minor revisions to the ratio of capital ships established at Washington, moving from 5:5:3 for the USA, the UK and Japan to 10:10:7. France and Italy refused to take part in this new agreement; however, they agreed to continue the ban on building capital ships for five years. Other agreements were reached on the size and number of cruisers, destroyers and submarines that each nation could possess. In addition, the rules regarding submarine warfare were tightened and required that submarines could not sink ships unless the crew and passengers had been removed to a place of safety. The treaty was to remain in effect until 1936.

The success of the London treaty must be seen against the backdrop of the Great Depression, when governments were looking for ways to cut expenditures in the face of falling tax revenues. There was little enthusiasm for spending money on armaments in a time of domestic economic hardship. This was especially true in the democracies, where defence spending was unpopular compared to domestic relief programmes. Therefore it was easy to agree to limit armaments despite the strategic objections of the professional naval officers.

## The London Naval Treaty, 1936

In 1935 the major powers met to renegotiate the London treaty of 1930, which was due to expire in 1936. The conference was a failure—the Japanese walked out, as did the Italians. Japan did not wish to submit to limits on her naval construction and demanded equal tonnage with the United Kingdom and the United States. The UK, France and the USA signed a treaty in 1936 with respect to cruiser tonnage but all agreements on limiting the number and size of warships collapsed after 1936 in view of the Japanese and German rearmament programs and the increasing number of crises and conflicts in the world.

## The Geneva Disarmament Conference, 1932–4

The Paris Peace Settlement had limited armaments for Germany and her allies during the First World War. Wilson's Fourteen Points had supported a move to general disarmament as a goal for the post-war world. Public support for disarmament was encouraged by a number of factors:

- the idea of collective security and the League of Nations that would ensure a more peaceful world and reduce the need for extensive armaments
- a belief that arms races in various forms had been a major cause of the war and that reducing arms would reduce the chance of another war



**Were there any threats to peace that might have disrupted the possibility of disarmament discussions being successful?**



**Why was there continued support for disarmament in the democracies?**

- the sheer cost of arms at a time when nations were struggling to recover from the economic dislocation of the war. This made arms reduction programs attractive, economically and politically, especially in the democracies, and was particularly true after the onset of the Great Depression in 1929
- the impression after the relatively peaceful 1920s that the risk of war had been greatly reduced and that large military establishments were no longer necessary. The optimism of the Locarno Pact and the Kellogg–Briand Agreement served to support this general viewpoint.
- The League of Nations was to promote the cause of world disarmament as part of its mandate to maintain peace. The League began to prepare for a world disarmament conference, which was convened in Geneva in 1932. Thirty-one nations attended, including the USA and the USSR, who were not members of the League.

### Problems for the Geneva conference

By 1932 a number of crises had occurred, as well as increasing demands to revise the Paris Peace Settlements. The onset of the Depression had reduced the atmosphere of optimism and international co-operation that had existed in the 1920s and replaced it with narrower, nationalistic attitudes. Nations which were fearful of their own security or who were under pressure to revise treaties would be less likely to subscribe enthusiastically to a program of general disarmament.

Another big issue was the problem of distinguishing between offensive and defensive weapons. The United States had called for the elimination of offensive weapons as a way to make all nations feel secure. The disagreement over what constituted an offensive as opposed to a defensive weapon led to many frustrating and inconclusive debates, which helped to undermine the conference. In addition, whatever decisions it made, the conference had no enforcement mechanism and no organization to oversee compliance. The difficulties of enforcing disarmament should be obvious when one considers that, as early as 1922, Germany was evading the disarmament provisions of the Treaty of Versailles through the Rapallo Treaty with Russia.

Another problem for the conference resulted from a simple but often overlooked political fact: disarmament would not proceed unless all nations felt secure in reducing their armaments. In this case, France was unwilling to reduce her military spending without a firm guarantee of support and protection from the other major powers. The United Kingdom and others were unwilling to give such a guarantee and therefore the French refused to consider arms reductions, particularly in the face of a resurgent Germany.

Germany used the conference as an opportunity to expose the hypocrisy of the other countries. Either the other countries should disarm to the German level, as outlined in the Treaty of Versailles, or Germany should be allowed to expand her forces to match theirs. Germany, in the absence of any support for these proposals, withdrew from the Geneva conference in July 1932.

After a strenuous diplomatic effort, Germany rejoined the conference in 1933, but Adolf Hitler was now chancellor of Germany. He repeated Germany's demand for equal treatment and, when this was not forthcoming, he withdrew from the conference and then from the League itself. Hitler had no interest in disarmament, but the unwillingness of the powers to give Germany equal treatment gave him an excuse to embark on his own rearmament scheme. This made the French look unco-operative, as they had proven unwilling to consider arms reduction though in fact they had little choice in the absence of any support from Britain and the United States.

Italy was also not interested in reducing its armed force in light of its imperial ambitions. Benito Mussolini, the Italian dictator, tried to divert the work of the conference to a Four Power Agreement involving the UK, Italy, France and Germany. This group would carry out peaceful revisions of the treaties, would make Germany an equal partner and would resemble Locarno as a means of negotiating between France and Germany. The pact was never ratified because of French objections but it showed a move away from the League to a Concert of Europe model.

The disarmament conference broke up without reaching any agreement. It was clear that Europe was entering a period of increased tension and that nations were going to have to consider what would be the best course of action to protect themselves and their vital interests. There were two fundamental approaches:

- 1 Increase arms spending to defend oneself, as in the case of the Maginot Line in France, or force concessions from other nations, following Hitler's model.
- 2 Attempt to negotiate a settlement of the outstanding issues and problems with other nations as a way to avoid the escalation of tensions and the need to rearm. This was the case with the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, as well as Mussolini's abortive Four Power pact, which sought to produce negotiated settlements and to recapture the spirit of Locarno.

What was once again clear was that disarmament could not be discussed unless the resolution of fundamental sources of conflict was reached. As long as Germany, Russia, Italy and Japan were determined to revise the Versailles settlements and recover lost territory, there was little hope of arms reduction in the long term.

### Activity:

#### Debate

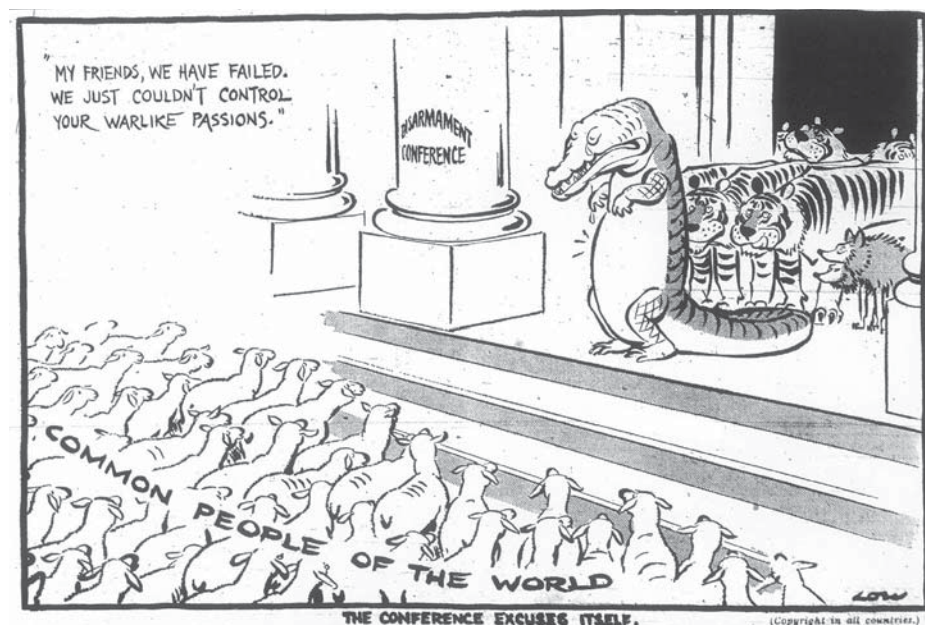
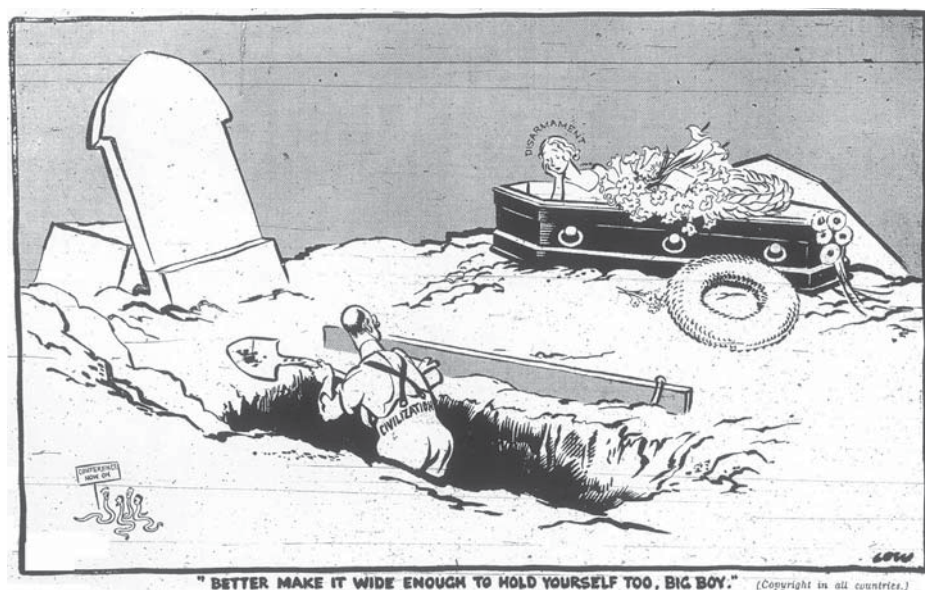
Organize a debate on the resolution that the reduction of arms is the best guarantee of peace.

### Activity:

By 1932, the chances for a successful disarmament conference were rapidly disappearing. Summarize why disarmament failed. Use the questions below to help you.

- 1 What possible strategies could have been suggested to revive the disarmament process?
- 2 Which nations had little real interest in disarmament and why?
- 3 What are the conditions necessary for a successful disarmament agreement?
- 4 What does Rapallo show about the possibilities of disarmament and its enforcement?





These cartoons by David Low, satirizing the failure of the disarmament talks, were originally published in London's *Evening Standard*: "Better make it wide enough to hold yourself too, Big Boy" on 1 July 1932; and "The Conference Excuses Itself", on 23 May 1934.

## TOK link

### Disarmament

After the First World War nations wanted to reduce arms for economic reasons and to promote peace. They were not successful in their quest for arms reduction, despite popular support and various international conferences.

More general issues that can be addressed here are:

- Why do nations have arms?
- What would motivate them to reduce or eliminate military stockpiles?
- How realistic is disarmament as a strategic objective?

- What are the possibilities for the elimination or reduction of weapons?
- What policies might help to limit the spread of weapons?
- How do the broader issues of global disarmament relate to the possession of arms by individuals?
- To what extent can or should the personal possession of arms be regulated?

Think in terms of human psychology:

- Does the history of disarmament test our understanding of human nature?
- Are humans inherently violent, or fearful?
- Will there always be reasons to have weapons?

## The League of Nations

The League of Nations was the most ambitious and idealistic outcome of the peace treaties. It set forth a new vision of international co-operation and collective security to ensure the peaceful settlement of disputes. It had little chance of success, as many of the major powers were not members and the concept of collective security was too abstract and idealistic for countries raised in a tradition of self-interest and traditional diplomacy. It did have a few successes in resolving disputes involving small powers but at no time did it intervene successfully in a dispute involving a major country—it did not have any power of its own or the support of the international community in such circumstances.

The idea for the creation of an international organization to prevent the outbreak of war was inspired by the catastrophic events of the First World War. There had been proposals prior to the war to create organizations to prevent or limit wars and to resolve disputes. The Hague conferences in 1899 and 1907 had proposed various forms of disarmament and had established the concept of an international court to resolve disputes.

The United Kingdom and France had put forward ideas for an international peace organization during the war but it was the influence and power of Woodrow Wilson and the United States that brought the League into being. A plan for a League of Nations was incorporated into Wilson's Fourteen Points, which were the basis of the Paris peace discussions. Wilson's desire to see the League formed became his first priority at the Paris negotiations. There was considerable support for an international peacekeeping organization in light of the devastating experience of the war. Many countries and individuals were convinced that a new approach in international relations was necessary if the world were to avoid total destruction in the future.

Wilson was so determined to persevere with the creation of the League that he was even prepared to compromise some of his principles expressed in the Fourteen Points. His general view was that any problems—errors or injustices which occurred in the Versailles settlements—could be resolved later through the League, but first the League had to exist. The League was to be a permanent international body in which all nations would meet, discuss and settle disputes in a peaceful manner. The Covenant of the League was written into the Versailles settlement with Germany in order that all signing nations would become members. There were 26 articles in the League Covenant. The key was Article X, which stated that “all members undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and political independence of all members of the League.”

This was the basis of the concept of collective security. This is a revolutionary concept as it calls upon all League members to assist in

resistance to aggression without reference to whether the incident was vital to their interests or not. This reverses centuries of tradition in international diplomacy. Countries would have to answer the call regardless of their level of interest in the crisis or its outcome. Money and manpower would have to be sacrificed in defence of a principle and not of vital interests as had been the case in the past.

Apart from the prevention of international conflict, the League would undertake activities that would deal with a range of economic and humanitarian issues affecting the daily life of ordinary people in all countries. The League would have a permanent headquarters, a secretariat and a group of civil servants who would administer the special departments of the League. These would include the mandates commission, the drugs department to end the drug trade, the slavery commission, and a refugee department. In addition, the International Court of Justice was established in The Hague to deal with legal matters between members and the International Labour Organization was created to improve working conditions and workers' rights in the member states.

### **The effects of the absence of the major powers**

A major impact on the effectiveness and function of the League was the absence of a number of major powers, who were defeated states from the First World War, and therefore not invited to be members. This meant that from the outset a group of states had been labelled as criminal or outlaw states. This could not be reconciled with the ideas of reconciliation that Wilson had proposed and the idea of an international community. Furthermore, these outlaw states had no interest in supporting the League or its principles and had no desire to support the Versailles settlements. The League became a guardian of the status quo represented by the increasingly unpopular Versailles settlements, not an impartial arbiter of disputes. The lessons of 1815 had been forgotten.

Another banned major power was the Soviet Union, which Wilson had insisted be excluded. The USSR was a major power, or would be when it recovered its strength. It had no desire to accept the status quo as decided at Versailles or the verdict of the First World War and would present a serious challenge in the years to come as it sought to recover lost territory. Excluding the USSR from the League only increased the Soviet Union's hostility towards other countries and confirmed their suspicion that there was a conspiracy to destroy them.

The greatest of the absent powers was the United States. Their absence was catastrophic, both diplomatically and psychologically. The United States was the wealthiest nation in the world and had the greatest potential to intervene in the interest of maintaining peace. They were the only nation to have emerged from the war in a stronger position than when the war began. The other victors, the United Kingdom and France, were exhausted and had limited ability to enforce the decisions of Versailles or the League. The absence of the USA meant that challenges to the status quo established at Versailles, particularly from major powers, would meet limited

resistance from a collection of small or exhausted states. In addition, the League had been the special project of the president of the United States, who had pressed for its creation and inserted its Covenant into the peace treaties with the defeated countries of the First World War. US rejection of the League and its principle of collective security undermined the credibility of the organization and its fundamental principles. It gave support to those countries who did not wish to fulfil their pledges under the Covenant although they were prepared to give support to the concept of peace.

The absence of three Great Powers had a number of serious consequences for the League. The League and the concept of collective security depended on collective action. The absence of the force that these three powers could bring to a crisis would limit the effectiveness of the League's reaction in a crisis. The fact that these three were outside the League meant that they had no stake in supporting its actions or decisions. In the case of Germany and Russia, both countries had much to gain by overturning the existing geo-political settlements. Their exclusion removed any chance for negotiated settlements of their grievances. The ability of the League to use some of its methods to discourage aggression, such as economic sanctions, would prove hollow if these three countries did not abide by League policies with respect to an aggressor.

The real impact of the exclusion of Russia and Germany occurred in 1922 when they signed the Treaty of Rapallo. They agreed to extend diplomatic recognition to each other and both denounced reparations. They agreed to economic and military co-operation. The significance of this development cannot be underestimated. Germany was able to develop weapons forbidden by the Versailles treaty, build factories to produce weapons which could not be seen by the League inspectors and train large numbers of personnel. In effect the disarmament provisions of the Treaty of Versailles were dead and the League had no recourse.

In addition, the co-operation of Russia and Germany did not bode well for the survival of the new states of Eastern and Central Europe. The mice could play while the cats were away but by 1922, the cats were serving notice that they would return. The folly of the policy of exclusion was evident to all.

The absence of certain Great Powers significantly diminished the prestige of the League. The League was supposed to be the agency to arrange peaceful reconciliations and support disarmament. After the war the first successful disarmament conference at Washington was organized and led by the United States (not a League member). The Locarno Treaty which resolved Franco-German relations in 1925 and provided great hope for lasting peace was negotiated without reference to the League as Germany was not even a member.

The other absence issue with respect to the great powers can be seen in the limited enthusiasm for enforcing the provision of the Treaty of Versailles in any way that might create conflict. This was particularly the case with the United Kingdom. British attitudes were affected by the American withdrawal. The immediate effect was the cancellation of the Anglo-American guarantee to support France in the event of a



German attack. This began a British return to her traditional policy of isolationism in order to preserve her freedom of action. The UK would not commit to intervention in Europe without American support and was suspicious of French ambitions.

The difference in attitude towards the treaty between the UK and France was a major problem for the League. The French wanted the League to police the Versailles settlement in order to suppress any German aggression or attempt to revise the treaty by force. The British wanted a more conciliatory approach, to rebuild the German economy in order to improve British trade. The UK wanted Germany as a counterweight to French ambitions and did not wish to engage in any major confrontation without American support. British attitudes were reflected in other countries including Canada and the other Dominions who were not prepared to support League sanctions if they interfered with their interests. Clearly Canada would not support any League action which targeted the United States for example.

Lastly the absence of the defeated countries or those that had been banned like Russia meant that the League was a league of victors whose goal seemed to be to enforce the status quo as determined at Versailles. This situation could not be successful in the long term as the defeated and revisionist powers would continue to launch challenges to the status quo which might lead to conflict. The fact that two of these revisionist powers, Russia and Germany, were potentially powerful meant that serious problems would be encountered in the future if changes to the Versailles settlements were not made.

The other serious problem with respect to the absence of countries is that a number of important ones dropped out between 1919 and 1939. This further weakened the League through their absence and by the fact that there was no penalty for quitting.

## Collective security

Collective security was the cornerstone of the League of Nations and the basis of a new theory for international relations. It is stated in Article X of the Covenant in which all the members undertook to protect all other members against aggression. This was new departure in diplomacy whereby the old alliance systems and the balance of power would be scrapped in favour of collective security. This is a very different system from traditional alliance and the difference must be made clear if one is to understand the problems of collective security.

Traditional alliances were made between nations with mutual interests and were designed to protect or defend against specific threats or specific nations. The treaty, like a contract, contained clear terms under which it was to operate and what the obligations of all the parties were. Nations enter into treaties or alliance with a clear idea of what their obligations are and because they perceive it to be in their national interest to do so. This is the basis of the traditional diplomacy: nations take action to defend or advance their own vital interests. These vital interests are well established and understood by all components of the country to be the reasons on which foreign policy decisions, including war, will be based.



Collective security is a more abstract concept. It does not specify where threats may come from or what the response should be under certain circumstances. It assumes that all nations are equally prepared to act in defence of the principle that aggression is wrong and must be resisted. It assumes that all nations will see each challenge to peace in exactly the same light and will be willing, regardless of the cost or how their own interests will be affected, to defend the principle. The fact is that not all nations see every crisis in the same way and are able or willing to make the kind of sacrifices—either monetary or human—to intervene. South American nations, for example, would see little reason to take part in a dispute in central Europe—certainly they would have trouble convincing their populations that they should do so.

Collective security failed as a concept because it ignored reality and required a level of altruism that humans have not yet been capable of. It failed because it asked nations to surrender their freedom of action, their sovereignty and enforce policies with which they disagreed or to intervene against countries with whom they were friends or had profitable relationships or who might do them harm. Collective security, the force of world opinion and the threat of world action to deter aggression was a wonderful abstract concept. It bore no relationship to the world of the 1920s. The evidence that collective security would not work was the fact that it was not very collective if three of the largest nations were not even members of the League. Even the United Kingdom and France, who were the foundation of the League, had grown further apart in their attitude towards enforcement of the treaty and the status of Germany. In the event of a dispute involving Germany there was a real possibility that they would not agree on how to react.

### **The lack of enforcement**

The weakness of collective security as a deterrent to aggression is demonstrated by the fact that it was felt necessary to reinforce the obligations of League members to resist aggression. This occurred in 1923 with the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance which was presented to the Council in 1923. This agreement would have required all members to come to the aid of a victim of aggression to an extent determined by the League Council. The proposal was supported by France which continued to be fearful of German aggression but rejected out of hand by the United Kingdom and the Dominions who wished to retain their freedom of action.

The same fate was suffered by the Geneva Protocol for the Pacific settlement of International Disputes. This attempted to enforce compulsory arbitration in all disputes and would have labelled as an aggressor anyone who did not submit. This proposal was rejected by the British and the Dominions.

It was clear that few members of the League were willing to take on the open-ended and commitments that collective security entailed. The reasons for this are not mere selfishness or an unwillingness to advance the cause of peace. The fact is that in the aftermath of the First World War the prospect of armed intervention would not have

gained support from the population in any nation. The armed forces in most nations had been sharply reduced and, following the First World War, there was widespread opposition towards the use of military force to resolve other countries' disputes. This was particularly true if the aggressor was a large country where considerable risk or sacrifice would be required. This was the lesson of the Corfu dispute in 1923, led by Mussolini, in which members of the League took no action. In addition, the uncertain economic situation at the end of the war discouraged nations from actions which would have cost money, incurred debt or undermined trading relationships.

Collective security was a concept that attracted great popular emotional support but nothing of a concrete nature. It was an illusion, a mirage in which desperate populations wanted to believe. As with all mirages, the closer one got to it, the more it faded. If there is to be collective security then the collective has to agree the world in 1920 was far from agreement on many fronts.

## Early attempts at peacekeeping 1920–5

The League had a mandate to resolve disputes between nations in order to preserve peace and prevent a resort to war between nations. In the early years of the League it was called on to intervene in a number of disputes, some violent, between nations. Its record of success in these disputes is mixed but allows us to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the League and collective security.

The success that the League enjoyed in this period include: the Aaland Islands, Upper Silesia, the Greco-Bulgarian War of 1925, There were also a number of incidents where the League failed to resolve or play any role in the dispute. These would include: the Seizure of Fiume, Vilna, the Russo-Polish War, the Corfu incident and the Ruhr invasion.

There seem to be some common factors which explain why the League was successful in resolving some disputes and unsuccessful in others. In all of the successful cases, the antagonists were small or medium powers who were unwilling to resort to violence. This allowed the League to negotiate and enforce a settlement to these disputes which both parties would accept. Where the League was unsuccessful the dispute involved a major power that refused to submit to the League, or countries determined to resort to violence who were not willing to seek peaceful solutions.

The Corfu incident in 1923 was an ominous warning of the potential weakness of the League and the enforcement of collective security. Italy was a major participant and when she resorted to violence the League did not have the power to compel her to stop or submit to arbitration. This was the case on every occasion when a major power decided to pursue a policy in contravention of the League. Peacekeeping would succeed in the disputes of small countries, provided that the stronger members (i.e. the UK and France) could agree on a course of action. This was often not the case.

## Source analysis

The following documents relate to the problems of collective security.

### Source A

*In the end, collective security fell prey to the weakness of its central premise—that all nations have the same interest in resisting a particular act of aggression and are prepared to run identical risks in opposing it. Experience has shown these assumptions to be false. No act of aggression involving a major power has ever been defeated by applying the principle of collective security. Either the world community has refused to assess the act as one which constituted aggression, or it has disagreed over the appropriate sanctions. And when sanctions were applied, they inevitably reflected the lowest common denominator, often proving so ineffectual.*

**Source:** Kissinger, H. 1995. *Diplomacy*, New York, USA. Touchstone. p. 249.

### Source B



THE GAP IN THE BRIDGE.

This cartoon was originally published in *Punch*, London, 10 December 1919.

### Question

Refer to sources A and B, and further discussion in this chapter, to explain why the League was unable to enforce its policies or maintain peace.

## Early problems for the League

The power of the League of Nations to resolve these disputes was not always apparent. In the absence of the United States—whose Senate finally rejected the Versailles Treaty in March 1920—it was essential that the remaining powers were in agreement on major issues. This was by no means the case. The repudiation by the United States of the entire peace settlement increased the reluctance of successive British governments in the 1920s to underwrite in any tangible way the European territorial settlement. In the dispute between Turkey and Greece of 1920–23, Britain and France took opposite sides. While France endorsed Poland's aims in Russia and Silesia, Britain pointedly did not. In addition, the distractions caused by major problems in Ireland and the Empire made it impossible for Britain to concentrate

### Activity:

#### The League of Nations: Successes and Failures

Choose one intervention by the League in a peacekeeping role that achieved its goals and one that did not. Put forward ideas as to why one succeeded and the other failed. Use these ideas to examine other cases to determine if some general principles can be determined.

on upholding the interests of the League before national concerns. While France fretted about Germany, the United Kingdom sought to redevelop trade links with her former enemy. The historian Sally Marks points out that the powers had assumed that the treaties would be honoured although this was emphatically not the case:

The Dutch refused to relinquish the Kaiser, and Germany did not surrender alleged war criminals. Nor did she disarm on schedule or meet reparations quotas. Austria could not and did not pay reparations. Poland did not accept her frontiers; Italian troops did not evacuate Fiume; and Turkey did not accept the Treaty of Sèvres. Nothing much happened. The will to enforce the treaties was lacking or at best divided.

Traynor, J. 1991. *Challenging History: Europe 1890–1990*, London, UK. Nelson. p. 123.

### TOK link

#### Does the study of history widen our knowledge of human nature?

#### Case study: The League of Nations

The League of Nations put forward a new idea of collective security in international relations. From this point forward, all members of the League were required to take part in opposing aggression of any type, anywhere it occurred. Prior to this, nations had only opposed aggression when it affected their own interests.

- What human or humanitarian values are encouraged by the concept of collective security?

- Which human tendencies make this difficult to implement?
- Are democracies more likely to implement collective security?
- Are there any effective ways to deter aggression without resorting to force?
- Can or should one differentiate between different types of aggression?
- Why was there a difference between the public's in-principle support of collective security and the actual, physical support (i.e. military) in times of crisis?

### IB Learner Profile link

#### Caring, principled, risk-takers

**Caring** Collective security, which is the basis of the League of Nations method to resolve conflicts and preserve peace, requires that all member nations come to the aid of any member who is threatened by or in conflict with another nation.

**How is this different to the rationale for intervention or active involvement in conflicts in the past? How does this show a more empathetic approach?**

**Principled** The countries that joined the League signed a Covenant—an agreement or contract—to behave in a certain way with respect to preventing or resisting aggression.



**Did the members of the League act with integrity and honesty in fulfilling the terms of the Covenant that they signed?**

(In particular, consider the relationship to Article X.)

Did their actions demonstrate support for the principles of fairness, justice and respect when they were called upon to protect fellow members from aggression?

**Risk-takers** The League of Nations and the concept of collective security were new and unproven territory for the nations of the world. To fulfill the goals of the League, nations would have to risk lives, money and perhaps the support of their own populations if the Covenant were to be enforced.



**Did the members of the League take risks to support the principles of the League? If they did not do so, why not?**

## The Ruhr Crisis

The Ruhr Crisis and the Locarno treaties represent the lowest and highest points of international relations in the 1920s. The French invasion of the Ruhr plunged Germany into political and economic chaos with a real threat of anarchy or revolution. The French were portrayed as bullies and lost considerable international support. The crisis did however have a positive outcome as it caused the United States to become involved in the financial rebuilding of Germany through the Dawes Plan. The Locarno Treaties which emerged partially from the Ruhr Crisis promised permanent solution to Franco-German tensions and as such set the tone for a general wave of optimism in the 1920s. This was echoed subsequently in the Kellogg–Briand Pact.

The Ruhr Crisis, a result of the Franco-Belgian invasion and occupation of the Ruhr area of Germany in 1923 has its roots in French fears about security. France had been increasingly concerned about security since the collapse of the Anglo-American guarantee that would have given the French support in the event of a German attack. In addition, France had been unsuccessful in her attempts to partially dismember Germany. By 1921 the United States and the United Kingdom were retreating into isolation and removing themselves from affairs on the Continent. In the UK there was growing sympathy for the idea that Germany had been treated too harshly and that she should be allowed to recover economically as a means to promote general European recovery. The British prime minister Lloyd George made a number of attempts to persuade the French to ease the German burden in the interests of peace and economic progress. He attempted to organize a review of German obligations at the Genoa Conference in 1922 but this failed when the Germans made a treaty (Rapallo) with the USSR.

The reparations commission had determined in 1921 that Germany should pay 132 billion gold marks to the allied powers. The French were anxious to enforce the reparations settlement in full for two reasons. They owed money to the United States and were hoping to use reparations payments to pay their debts. More importantly they could continue to weaken Germany by collecting the reparations and thus limiting the speed and extent of German economic recovery which could pose a serious threat to them in the future. The British attitude towards reparations was ambivalent. They needed money to pay the United States but were also aware that continued German economic weakness would limit the recovery of British trade.

The German signing of the Rapallo Treaty further convinced the British that if Germany were not conciliated she would slip into the Soviet orbit which would prove disastrous. The French were convinced that Germany was trying to avoid her obligations and should be made to pay. French premier Raymond Poincaré took a hard-line approach to Germany and her treaty obligations: only force



would convince the Germans to fulfil their obligations. The opportunity arose when Germany missed a delivery of timber as part of her payments. The French had Germany declared in default despite British objections and on 11 January 1923 French and Belgian troops invaded the Ruhr.

The French object was to collect reparations through seizing the output of the mines and factories of the Ruhr and shipping them to France. The German workers refused to co-operate and went on strike and engaged in acts of sabotage to prevent the French from obtaining any materials. These acts included the flooding of mines, burning of factories and destruction of railroads and ships. This led to violence and the imprisonment of leaders of the resistance movements as well as the death of a number of protestors.

The greatest crisis however was the catastrophic inflation that resulted from the French invasion and the response of the Weimar government. The Weimar government which was already struggling with a serious inflation problem brought on by the war and its own policies now compounded the problem exponentially. In order to support the workers in the Ruhr in their strike actions, the government simply printed more money to the point that paper money became worthless. Prices for goods rose to hundreds of billions of marks.

## **The collapse of the Weimar government**

Inside Germany, the principal victim was the middle class who had saved their money and planned for the future. Their savings were entirely wiped out and they were left demoralized and cynical about their future. They had lost faith in the system and would be vulnerable to the appeal of extremists in politics who promised to restore pride, faith and hope. It is not surprising that Hitler made his first attempt to seize power at this time.

This was a clear signal to the Allies that Germany was in danger of complete collapse and that a state of anarchy might well develop. This would open the door to revolutionary activity which might see Germany embrace communism. This was an anathema to the West and they realized that they would have to find some solution to the problem. The collapse of the German economy also meant that the Allies were not receiving reparations payments but their hopes for European economic recovery were in serious jeopardy. The question for both the German government and the Allies was how to resolve the crisis that had developed.

The breakthrough came with the appointment of Gustav Stresemann as chancellor of Germany. Stresemann called off the passive resistance in the Ruhr and announced that Germany would comply with her obligations under the treaty of Versailles. The French were willing to come to an agreement as the Ruhr occupation had been an economic failure and had damaged French relations with her former allies (the UK and the USA).

The key player in the solution of the Ruhr Crisis and the reparation issue which had triggered it was the United States. The USA was the wealthiest power in the world and power to whom the British, French etc. owed huge war debts. The Americans demanded payment from the United Kingdom and France but they could not pay if Germany did not pay them. The impasse was resolved by the intervention of the United States under the leadership of Charles Dawes. This plan allowed Germany to reschedule her reparations payments so that the total amount was reduced and the deadlines were extended. In order for the German economy to recover extensive foreign loans, largely from the United States, were arranged. In addition much private American capital flowed into German businesses and German government bonds.

The resolution of the economic crisis and Germany's willingness to co-operate with the Allies was part of an important policy decision that had been made in Germany prior to the Ruhr Crisis. This was the **Policy of Fulfilment** by which the Weimar government had decided that it would be useless to continue to defy the Treaty of Versailles in the hopes of having it modified. Instead they decided to comply as far as possible with the treaty and in so doing create an environment that would convince the allies that Germany was worthy of some revision of its terms based on her good citizenship and co-operation. The Policy of Fulfillment was adopted by Stresemann and his successors until the rise of Hitler. It proved successful in gaining a number of concessions for Germany and rehabilitating her international reputation.

**Policy of Fulfilment** A policy introduced in Weimar Germany in support of German co-operation with the terms of the Treaty of Versailles in order to gain concessions in the future from the Allied powers.

## The spirit of Locarno

After the resolution of the Ruhr Crisis, Stresemann proposed to the Allies that Germany would be prepared to accept its current boundaries with France and Belgium and have their obligation enforced by international treaty. This proposal for détente was welcomed by the British and supported by the new French premier Aristide Briand. The result was the **Locarno Treaty** signed in October 1925. The most important part of the Locarno Treaty was that Germany accepted its borders with France and Belgium as permanent and these borders were guaranteed by the UK and Italy. Germany would also join the League of Nations.

This seemed to be a genuine breakthrough in Franco-German relations and addressed the security concerns that had driven French policy at Versailles and in the years after. It would allow Germany to be rehabilitated without posing a threat to Western Europe. The French and the British might also repair their relationship which had been damaged by French insistence on a hard approach to Germany.

Germany agreed to seek changes in her eastern borders by means of discussion, agreement and arbitration with Poland and Czechoslovakia. It should be noted that while the Western borders of Germany had been fixed by international guarantee, this did not occur in the east. Britain refused to guarantee the countries to the east of Germany. This allowed Germany to assume that her Eastern borders could be changed and with little objection from the Allies.

**Locarno treaty** An agreement signed in 1925 by the UK, France, Germany and Belgium in which Germany agreed to accept her western borders as determined at the Versailles settlement. This was seen as a great step towards permanent peace in Europe.

The results of the Locarno treaties were that Germany accepted the results of the First World War on her western borders but not in the east. The overall result of the Treaty was a sense of euphoria the “spirit of Locarno” the order of the day. The general mood was of great optimism: tensions had been reduced as Germany had accepted its borders and renounced violence, prosperity was returning to Europe, democracy was flourishing in Germany and a general sense of optimism prevailed.

The sense of progress towards peace and a new relationship between the Allies and Germany was evident in the next few years. Germany joined the League of Nations and obtained a permanent seat on the League council. The Allies removed their troops from the left bank of the Rhine and the Allied commission to supervise German disarmament departed in 1927. By 1930 the Allied occupation armies had left Germany and she became an independent state once again. The spirit of Locarno was perhaps best exemplified in 1928 when the Kellogg–Briand pact was signed by 65 countries. They agreed by this action to renounce war as an instrument of national policy. The work of Stresemann and Briand in arranging the Locarno agreement was recognized when they were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1926.

Locarno seemed to be proof that the First World War and its tensions had finally been resolved. The economic prosperity of the 1920s, the failure of communism to spread beyond the USSR and the willingness of Germany to accept the decision of Versailles were strong indications that a new era might well be at hand. But how much Locarno really accomplished towards a permanent peace must be looked at more critically, in view of the fact that the League was not strengthened and the principle of collective security remained uncertain in its practical application to meeting Europe’s long-term security needs. Germany did not agree to accept her eastern border which is of great significance because this is where her worst grievances against the territorial settlement of Versailles were found. Her continued co-operation with the USSR in the Treaty of Rapallo meant that she was continuing to evade the disarmament clauses of the treaty and also working with a country that wanted to redraw the map of Eastern Europe.

It must also be remembered that the Locarno spirit was closely tied to the economic health of Europe that prevailed in the 1920s which allowed reparations to be paid, political extremism to disappear and a sense of international co-operation to flourish. If Europe were to continue towards a peaceful future, the optimism of this period would have to be maintained and this was largely based on economic health—specifically the support of the United States.

### **Charles Dawes (1865–1951)**

Charles Dawes was a prominent US businessman and public servant who gained a reputation for reforming the budget process in the United States. In 1923 Dawes was asked by the League of Nations to chair a committee on German reparations. The Dawes report was a very detailed analysis of the problem and contained a recommendation for the stabilization of the German economy and a more reasonable schedule for reparations payments. Dawes was awarded the Nobel peace Prize for his work and his work laid the basis for American investment in the German economy which produced the Golden Age of Weimar from 1925–29. Dawes later served as vice-president of the United States and as a delegate to the Geneva Disarmament Conference in 1932.



### Gustav Stresemann (1878–1929)

Gustav Stresemann was a successful German businessman who first entered politics in 1907. A dedicated German nationalist, he had opposed the Treaty of Versailles. Realizing that Germany could not gain her goals by force, he set out to improve her position after Versailles through diplomacy. He was elected chancellor in 1923 and brought an end to the economic crisis caused by the Ruhr occupation. As Foreign Minister he accepted the Dawes plan to reduce reparations, negotiated the Locarno Agreement and oversaw Germany's entry in the League of Nations. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in the Locarno negotiations. His determination to restore German power and pride was uppermost in his policies at all times. He believed, however, that that co-operation and negotiation with the Allied powers would be the most effective way to realize his goals. He died suddenly in 1929, just before Germany was decimated by the Great Depression.



## Source analysis

These documents relate to the Locarno Treaty.

### Source A

*Stresemann skillfully proposed international arbitration for a new schedule of reparations, expecting an international forum to prove less exacting than France alone was likely to be. In November 1923, France accepted the appointment of an American banker, Charles G. Dawes, as "impartial arbiter" to reduce France's reparation claim—a galling symbol of the disintegration the wartime alliance. The Dawes Committee's recommendations establishing a reduced schedule of payments for five years were accepted in April 1924.*

*Over the next five years, Germany paid out about \$1 billion in reparations and received loans of about \$2 billion, much of it from the United States. In effect, America was paying Germany's reparations, while Germany used the surplus from American loans to modernize its industry. Forced to choose between a weak Germany and a Germany capable of paying reparations, France had opted for the latter, but then had to stand by as reparations helped to rebuild Germany's economic and, ultimately, its military power. By the end of 1923, Stresemann was in a position to claim some success.*

**Source:** Kissinger, H. 1995. *Diplomacy*. New York, USA. Touchstone. p. 272.

### Source B

*The Locarno Pact was greeted with exuberant relief as the dawning of a new world order. The three foreign ministers—Aristide Briand of France, Austen Chamberlain of Great Britain, and Gustav Stresemann of Germany—received the Nobel Peace Prize. But amidst all the jubilation, no one noticed that the statesmen had sidestepped the real issues; Locarno had not so much pacified Europe as it had defined the next battlefield.*

*The reassurance felt by the democracies at Germany's formal recognition of its Western frontier showed the extent of the demoralization and the confusion that had been caused by the mélange of old and new views on international affairs. For in that recognition was implicit that the Treaty of Versailles, which had ended a victorious war, had been unable to command compliance with*

the victors' peace terms, and that Germany had acquired the option of observing only those provisions which it chose to reaffirm. In this sense, Stresemann's unwillingness to recognize Germany's Eastern frontiers was ominous; while Great Britain's refusal to guarantee even the arbitration treaties gave international sanction to two classes of frontier in Europe—those accepted by Germany and guaranteed by other powers, and those neither accepted by Germany nor guaranteed by the other powers.

**Source:** Kissinger, H. 1995. *Diplomacy*. New York, USA. Touchstone. p. 274.

## Source C



Cartoon by David Low, published in *The Star* on 1 December 1925.

## Source D

### **Austen Chamberlain on the Locarno Treaties 1925**

(b) *I believe that a great work of peace has been done. I believe it above all because of the spirit in which it was done and the spirit which it has engendered. It would not have been done unless all the governments, and I will add all the nations, had felt the need to start a new and better chapter of international relations; but it would not have been done unless this country was prepared to take her share in guaranteeing the settlements so come to ...*

*We who live close to the Continent, we, who cannot disassociate ourselves from what passes there, whose safety, whose peace and the security of whose shores are manifestly bound up with the peace and security of the Continent, and, above all, of the Western nations, must make our decision; and we ask the House to approve the ratification of the Treaty of Locarno in the belief that by that treaty we are averting danger from our own country and from Europe, that we are safeguarding peace, and that we are laying the foundations of reconciliation and friendship with the enemies of a few years ago.*

**Source:** Joll, J. 1961. *Britain and Europe*. London, UK. Adam and Charles Black. p. 284

## Question

What different attitudes towards the outcome of Locarno do Sources A–D demonstrate?



## Depression and threats to international peace and collective security: Manchuria 1931–3 and Abyssinia 1935–6

The Great Depression is the single greatest reason for the collapse of international peace. It led to aggression and the collapse of international co-operation in the Manchurian crisis where both the League of Nations and collective security were exposed as hollow concepts. It brought Hitler to power, undermined the Geneva disarmament talks and weakened the United Kingdom and France—the guardians of the status quo. This in turn made it possible for Mussolini to engage in aggression in Africa and bring about the final collapse of any hope for preserving peace, by ending the Stresa Front agreement and providing a useful ally for Hitler.

### The impact of the Great Depression

The causes of the Great Depression are not the focus of this prescribed subject. Rather it is how that event influenced the development of international relations in the years after 1929. This should be appreciated not only with reference to the two specific topics, Manchuria and Abyssinia, that are included in the prescribed subject but also in how it had an impact on the ability of the world to continue its search for peace and harmony.

The Depression was not caused by the Wall Street crash of 1929. This was merely the signal that it had arrived. The roots of the Depression can be found in the weakened state of many nations after the First World War, particularly Germany and the United Kingdom which had been economic powerhouses prior to 1914. In addition, the turmoil in Russia and Eastern Europe had further weakened trade and world markets. The burden of war-debts, government deficits, and the political and social turmoil as a result of the First World War had all played a role.

The Depression not only altered the world in a tangible economic form but also devastated its spirit. It resulted in a terrible struggle to survive by any means—nations were no longer willing to co-operate through trade and exchange but adopted an exclusionary, bomb-shelter mentality, where they cut off contact with their neighbours, raised tariffs and ceased to care much about the world beyond their own borders. This narrow attitude was probably worst in the democratic states where citizens demanded that their governments devote their money and resources to domestic problems and ignore the wider problems of the world. No energy was to be wasted on international agreements or the means to enforce them—domestic hardship was to be the focus not armaments to control aggressive foreign states.

Depression did produce aggressive states—those who were driven to extremes of hardship saw war and conquest as a solution to their problems as shown in Japan's attack on Manchuria. The Japanese, terribly afflicted by the decline of world trade, argued that without Manchuria they would starve. The world economic system was broken—it was every nation for itself.

The Great Depression, more than any other reason, brought Hitler to power in Germany, seriously endangering efforts to maintain peace. Hitler had as his primary goal the destruction of the Versailles settlement by whatever means. His solution to Germany's economic weakness was to advocate territorial expansion—Lebensraum—to seize much-needed resources. This was a clear challenge to those hoping to avoid another war.

A clear understanding of the impact of the Great Depression on the efforts to maintain world peace is therefore crucial. It should be seen as the single greatest reason for the collapse of all previous efforts to develop international understanding and co-operation. The Depression destroyed not only the economic welfare of the world but also its optimistic spirit represented by the spirit of Locarno, Kellogg–Briand, the League of Nations and other attempts at international co-operation. These progressive, idealistic agreements that had encouraged people to imagine a new form of international diplomacy were forgotten or ignored in the selfish, cynical world of the 1930s where the survival of the fittest was becoming the order of the day.

The Depression created the reasons for aggression in the Manchurian crisis and robbed nations of the physical ability and motivation to co-operate to preserve peace. The result was that the League and its founding principle of collective security were exposed as hollow, impotent ideas unable to guarantee or even hold out hope for a peaceful future. The simple fact was that the powers who had pledged support for collective security were now even less able to stand behind it, assuming that they had any desire to still do so.

The Depression seriously weakened Britain and France who had tried to defend the Versailles agreement and the precepts of the League. Their weakness was exposed by the Manchurian crisis which served to encourage further aggression in the form of Mussolini's attack on Abyssinia, ending the Stresa Front agreement and providing Hitler with an ally in his desire for conquest.

### Discussion point:

#### Japan's invasion of Manchuria

- Why did they embark on this course of action?
- What response did the international community make to this flagrant act of aggression?

Discuss the impact their action or inaction had on international relations in subsequent years?

### TOK link

#### Integrating areas of knowledge—human sciences and ethics

It is often said that human behaviour is unpredictable, and that it is impossible to study human actions in a scientific manner. Observing human activities involves ways of knowing that include perception, emotion, value judgments and self-knowledge.

Students should consider the relationship between the subject matter and the methods employed by the human sciences—including observation, value judgments, principles of motivation, language usage, statistical evidence, quantitative instruments for gathering information etc.—that may influence the conclusions reached.

Ethics involve a discussion of the way in which we live our lives and justify moral actions. An examination of the past can be problematic as we may make judgments about historical events and personalities from a quite altered contemporary perspective. Conversely, it is also necessary to take into account the legacy of past decisions and attitudes that have a bearing on the present day political and historical context of nation states and the identity and beliefs of peoples living throughout the world today.

## Manchuria 1931–3

Comprehension of the reasons for the Japanese takeover of Manchuria must take into consideration a wide range of issues. The first aspect that warrants consideration is the Japanese economy. Japan had undergone an industrial revolution from the late 19th century and had become the largest industrial power in Asia. This growth and development was based, like that of the UK, on the success of her exports to the rest of the world. Japan has few natural resources and, exacerbated by the growth of the population through economic development, could not feed herself. She depended on the export of manufactured goods principally to the United States to maintain her prosperity. The collapse of the American markets and higher US tariffs created enormous hardship in Japan with massive unemployment and reports of starvation in rural areas.

The disastrous economic situation led to a decline in the prestige of the liberal democratic government and demands for action by radical nationalist groups often composed of army officers. They demanded that the government take action to protect the population and insulate Japan from the failures of the liberal capitalist economic system. Their specific objective was to take over the Chinese province of Manchuria which held a vast wealth of natural resources of all kinds.

The decision to go to Manchuria was made easier because Japan had made significant economic investments in the region since the Russo-Japanese war, and had maintained troops in the city of Port Arthur to protect her interests. Furthermore, as a result of civil war in China Manchuria had become an autonomous province under its own warlord. Japan had been pushing to expand her control of China throughout the 20th century and had increased her presence there as a result of the Treaty of Versailles and the concessions forced from a weak Chinese government during the First World War.

Militarily, the Japanese decision to invade Manchuria made good sense and posed few risks. Manchuria lies in close proximity to Japan and its colony Korea (Japanese since 1910). China was dissolved in civil war and could offer no resistance. Since the Washington conference of 1922, Japan had military supremacy in East Asia and none of the Great Powers had the forces or bases in the region to oppose her. Lastly the depression had caused further cuts in armaments spending in the West and the UK, France and the USA were in no position to intervene.

Japan invaded Manchuria on the pretext that her property and citizens had been attacked by Chinese troops. The incident was manufactured by the radical nationalists to force the civilian government to support military action. The Chinese were rapidly defeated and in 1932, Japan established the puppet state of Manchukuo. This was a clear challenge to the principle of collective security and the League. China was a member and appealed for support against Japan. What would or could be done about this flagrant violation of the Covenant and international peace agreements? The short answer is that nothing would or could be done. We need to understand why that was the case.

## Legacy for the League

Did the Japanese withdrawal signal the end of the League? The point is debatable but it may not have had as much influence as some authors suggest. Japan and Manchuria were not central concerns to European powers, and the issue may well have been treated as a local one. No vital European interest had been at stake in Manchuria, so it did not necessarily threaten the viability of the principal of collective security in application to a crisis that was more central to Europe.

The USA and the UK were not able to co-operate on a policy with respect to Manchuria. Neither country wanted to be responsible for taking the lead. This made it even less likely that any effective response could be mounted against the Japanese violation of the Covenant. Collective security in the Far East was dead as of this moment. The UK and the USA had entered into a policy of **appeasement** to be able to accommodate the demands of the revisionist powers in the hopes that they would become less aggressive and not create conditions for another world conflict.

**Appeasement** A policy practiced by the UK and France in the late 1930s that sought to avoid war with Germany by revising the treaty of Versailles to eliminate the clauses considered unfair by Germany. The policy held that reasonable revisions and negotiations would be the best way to avoid war.

## Failure of collective security, Manchuria 1931

The only members of the League with substantial military force were the United Kingdom and France. Neither power had the bases in the Far East to support an effective challenge. Only the UK had a large navy, but, being 5000 miles away, was not in a good position to engage its warships in the Far East. Furthermore, the British Navy was itself in a state of crisis, having recently experienced a mutiny over proposed pay cuts. There was also a crucial absence of motivation to undertake a military mission. Nations normally engage in hostilities when something of vital interest to their security or welfare is at stake. This clearly was not the case with Manchuria and it would not have been possible to convince the British public that such an expedition with the resulting cost in lives and resources was to their advantage. Democracies cannot make major foreign policy decisions that the public will not support—especially wars.

The mood of the 1930s made it even less likely that the United Kingdom would intervene. The public attention was on the internal economic problems of the depression. No one would support money for war when many were hungry and unemployed. Furthermore the anti-war pacifist movements were very strong especially in the UK and people preferred to put their faith in the League or to believe that war should occur only in self-defence.

The United States might have been expected to take a stronger position on the Japanese actions. It was the Americans who had claimed to be a friend of China and who had supported the **Open Door Policy** to prevent China from coming under the influence of a single power. The United States had been suspicious of Japan and her rival for power in the Pacific for many years and might have interpreted their Manchurian action as a serious challenge to American interests. Nevertheless the USA took no action over Manchuria.

**Open Door** American policy which supported equal access for all countries to trade and economic opportunities. It opposed colonial and other political restrictions to trade and investment.

The precise reasons for this failure to respond, included the lack of armed forces or bases necessary to support any military expedition. The US policy of isolationism which had grown stronger after the



First World War would have made it difficult to develop any enthusiasm for an initiative in Asia—not a vital interest to most Americans. The United States was also severely affected by the Depression and the population was focused on the internal domestic crisis, with little interest in foreign affairs and a marked unwillingness to devote any further resources to them.

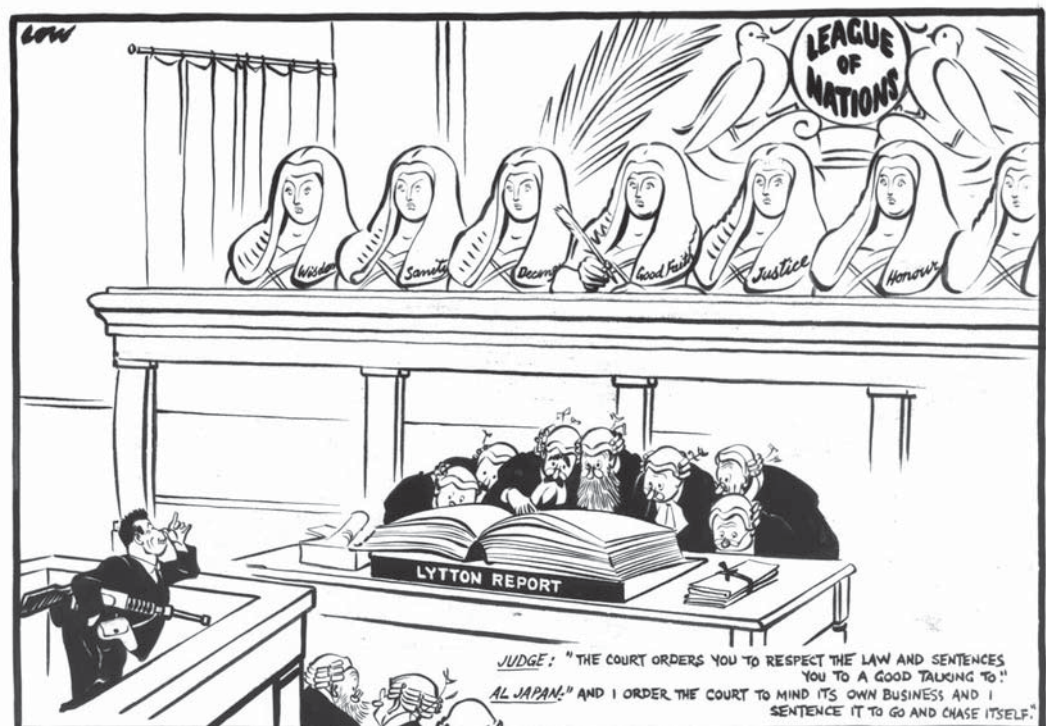
A strategic consideration also influenced British and US policy. The United Kingdom and the United States had extensive property, trading networks and investments in China and the Far East. Neither power was in a position to defend these in the face of Japanese hostility. Any serious attempt to oppose the Japanese action might result in retaliation against these interests.

The League of Nations was supposed to maintain peace and resist aggression against any of its members. Yet the League was largely ineffective as it had no armed forces of its own. Moral condemnation and disapproval by the world community was one way that an aggressive nation might be deterred. But Japan could hardly be expected to worry about moral condemnation when its very survival was at stake and the nations condemning her were the products of a failed international economic system.

### Japan withdraws from the League

The League's response to the crisis was to send out a fact-finding mission under Lord Lytton. By the time the report was produced, the entire matter was likely to have been forgotten. The Lytton Commission Report, which was issued in 1932, recognized that Japan had some justifiable grievances about the situation in Manchuria but should have tried other solutions before resorting to force. It suggested that China grant independence to Manchuria and that Japan withdraw its forces. This did not represent a strong condemnation but Japan refused to accept the criticism and withdrew from the League of Nations. Manchuria became part of the Japanese Empire as the puppet state of Manchukuo.

*Trial by Geneva by cartoonist David Low published by the Evening Standard on 24 November 1932.*



### Discussion point:

#### Economic sanctions

Economic sanctions depended on the willingness of nations to undertake a boycott or other economic action against the aggressor. It also meant that all nations would have to participate.



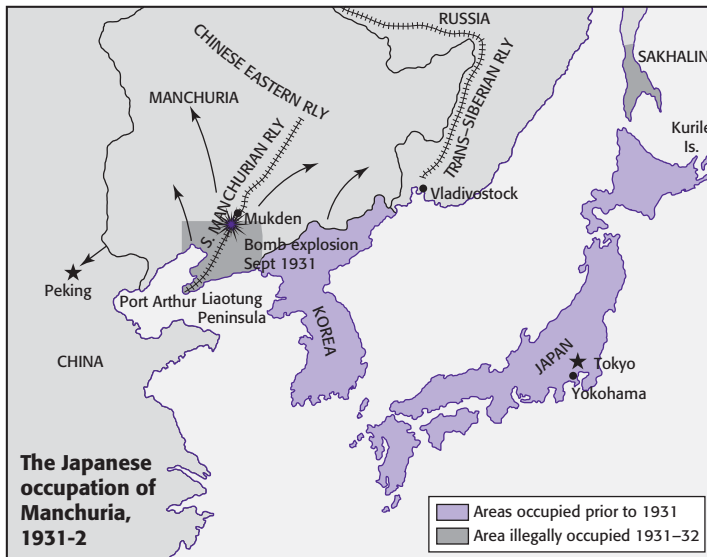
**Why wasn't this a realistic option? Discuss in relation to the vested interests of the League and non-League members.**

### Activity:

Did Manchuria encourage the aggressive action of neighbouring states?

Debate the resolution that "self-defence is the only justification for war".





**Source:** Catchpole, B. 1983. *A Map History of the Modern World*. Toronto, Canada. Irwin, p. 53.

## Abyssinia 1935–6

The Abyssinian crisis is widely regarded as the ultimate example of the failure of the collective security principle. It sent a clear and perhaps final signal that the League of Nations no longer played an important role in world affairs.

### Background to the crisis

The crisis and its impact however cannot be understood without sound knowledge of the significant events in this period, since 1933. The single most important threat to world peace was the rise to power of Adolf Hitler and the return to the international scene of Germany, now bent on reasserting her position in the world. The rise of Hitler precipitated a series of events that served to heighten the sense of crisis in the world and to demonstrate the resurgence of German power and ambition. These included the collapse of the Geneva disarmament talks due, in part, to the German position, Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations and Hitler's announcement of rearmament policies in flagrant violation of the Treaty of Versailles.

All European nations were likely to be affected by this new aggressive German posture and Italy was no exception. Until the rise of Hitler, Italy had played a significant role in Europe as a signatory of the Locarno agreement and as a member of the League. She had also been a defender of the Versailles Treaty when, in 1934, she took steps to discourage the German annexation of Austria in defiance of the Treaty. Nevertheless it was clear to Mussolini that his position in central Europe was going to be weakened by the German resurgence and that he might be faced with a confrontation with Hitler if Germany demanded the return of the South Tyrol area that was entirely German speaking. Italy had acquired South Tyrol from Austria as a result of the Treaty of Versailles despite the fact that it was a clear violation of the concept of self-determination.

Mussolini met with the other countries who could be targets of German revisionism—most notably the UK and France—in an attempt to reach an agreement to counterbalance German power. The three countries met in the Italian town of Stresa and reached an agreement in which they pledged to resist any German attempt to modify the Versailles Treaty by force. This agreement, had it continued, might have been effective in restraining Hitler. It would certainly have removed a potential enemy and secured the Mediterranean lifeline to the Suez Canal and India that the UK so valued.

### Why Abyssinia?

Why did Mussolini set out on a campaign to conquer Abyssinia? The resurgence of Hitler and the fact that Italy could no longer play a significant role in Western or Central Europe encouraged Mussolini to look elsewhere for territory, empire and a sense of importance. Mussolini had always wanted Italy to play a bigger role in world affairs. This was part of the national strength and pride of the Fascist ideology. One of his ambitions was to expand Italy's colonial holding in Africa in emulation of the French and British and to satisfy his dreams of a "new Roman Empire" in Africa and the eastern Mediterranean. Abyssinia was a logical choice for Mussolini as it was the only African territory available. (All the rest were already claimed.) It was also conveniently located next to two existing Italian colonies and was the location of a humiliating event in Italian history. In 1896, Italy had tried to conquer Abyssinia but failed—the only European nation to be defeated in its attempt to subdue a native African state. Revenge for the defeat at Adowa was a factor in the Italian decision.

There were also economic factors as Mussolini believed that there were oil deposits in the region and that it might be developed as an outlet for the surplus Italian population, destined to migrate to the Americas, in a newly reconstituted Italian Empire. These Italian populations would not only help provide resources and markets for Italian industry but also a pool of army recruits in future years. The native population could bolster the Italian forces much as the French had done with their African recruits.

A final important factor in Mussolini's decision to attack may have come from his relationship with the UK and France forged by the **Stresa front**. Both of them had already conceded that Abyssinia lay within the Italian sphere of interest. He also assumed that their friendship would allow him to pursue his colonial ambitions in return for his allegiance as part of the anti-Hitler coalition. It was not an entirely unreasonable assumption and certainly fitted in well with his support for Realpolitik.

### The lack of opposition to Italy

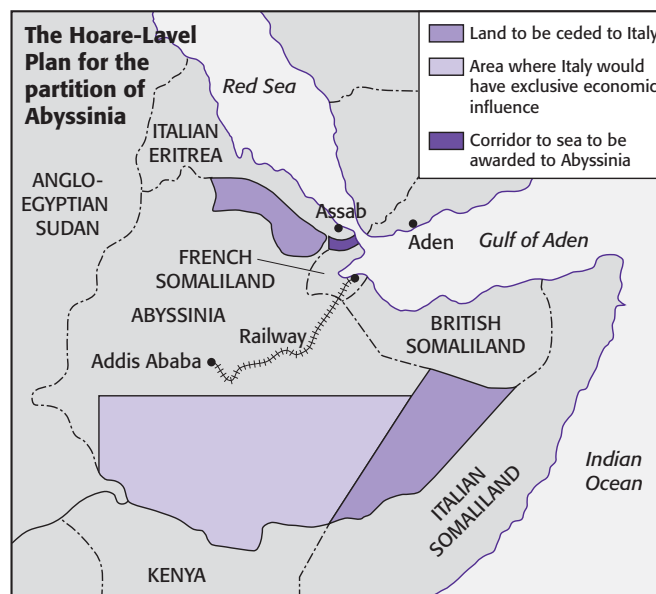
The conflict began in a small way in 1934 with a border skirmish between Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland. This was an excuse for Mussolini to move large numbers of troops into the region in preparation for a full-scale invasion. The dispute had been referred to the League for arbitration in September 1935.

**Stresa Front** An agreement signed in 1935 by Britain, France and Italy to maintain the Locarno agreement and support the independence of Austria. It might have deterred Hitler but it collapsed as a result of Abyssinia.

### Activity:

- What was the purpose of the Hoare-Laval pact? Why is it referred to as an example of Realpolitik?
- Conduct a debate on the resolution that "sacrificing Abyssinia was less important than maintaining the Stresa Front".

The invasion began in October 1935. On 7 October Italy was declared the aggressor and on 18 November 51 states voted to impose economic sanctions against Italy. The sanctions did not include oil and steel and the UK did not close the Suez Canal to Italian shipping. Even apart from the fact that the sanctions excluded strategic material like oil, they were ineffective as so many large nations (such as Germany and the United States) were not bound by them. These sanctions were little more than an irritant. The UK and France found themselves in a difficult situation. They had either to make the sanctions work, so that the League was seen as a genuine force for peace, or they would have to placate Italy in order to maintain the Stresa front against the real threat: Hitler. In the end they accomplished neither.



Their solution was a compromise known as the **Hoare-Laval Pact** named after the French prime minister and the British foreign secretary. The proposal was to give Mussolini two-thirds of Abyssinia including the most fertile regions and leave the rest as an independent state. The compromise never took effect as the plan was leaked to the press and caused an enormous negative reaction among the public, especially in Britain. The compromise was abandoned: Hoare resigned and the Italian invasion continued.

**Hoare-Laval Pact** A plan devised by the French and British foreign ministers to settle the Abyssinian crisis and avoid losing Italy as an ally against Hitler. It failed due to the lack of public support and Mussolini's refusal to accept only part of Abyssinia.

There was no way to stop the Italian invasion without force and neither the UK or France was prepared to go to that extreme. By May 1936 the war was over and the whole of Abyssinia was in Italian hands. The damage caused by this event was monumental both to the League and to the concept of collective security, in its impact on the viability of Locarno and Stresa as barriers to German aggression. Hitler exposed the complete collapse of these agreements through his reoccupation of the Rhineland in March 1936.

### The significance of the crisis

The significance of Abyssinia should not be underestimated. The League and its concept of collective security were exposed as entirely hollow, the more so because the leading powers in the League were unwilling and unable to apply it. The UK and France could not apply any sanction or take any action that risked a war—their populations would not support it. The result was that while they denounced the aggressors, they did not prevent their actions or protect the victims, only serving to annoy those responsible and reveal the weakness of the powers defending Versailles and the League.

In addition it was clear to Mussolini that the United Kingdom and France were unwilling to support his goals in Africa and the Balkans. If he wanted to fulfil his territorial ambitions, his only option was to associate himself with a more powerful nation: Germany. Hitler also saw that UK and France were not willing to resort to force even when their opponent was as weak as Italy and this strengthened his determination to press forward with Germany's territorial demands and revision of the Versailles settlement.

## Summary of the outcomes

Collective security and the League of Nations were exposed as entirely hollow concepts.

- Diplomacy still worked in the era of self-interest. Nations would only become involved in issues which affected their vital interests. Therefore, there was no support for a campaign against Italy over Abyssinia.
- The United Kingdom and France were exposed as militarily weak and lacking in any motivation to defend the Versailles Treaty at threat of war.
- The strong pacifist movements in Western countries made it very difficult to develop any enthusiasm for collective security beyond an intellectual interest.
- Revisionist nations such as Germany and Japan were encouraged to continue their campaigns and expand their territory as it was clear that there was no effective opposition to their plans.
- Mussolini allied with Hitler—partly due to the failure of the UK and France to support him and partly out of the recognition that they were unlikely to win a major conflict in the event of a European war.
- This created a serious strategic problem for the British in the Mediterranean, and the potential for disaster in the event of a European war.

## Recommended further reading

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## Exam practice

### Source analysis

These documents refer to the Abyssinian Crisis, 1935–6, and the League of Nations.

#### Source A

Extract from the Conservative Election manifesto, 1935.

*The League of Nations will remain, as heretofore, the keystone of British foreign policy ... We shall therefore continue to do all in our power to uphold the Covenant and maintain and increase the efficiency of the League ... We shall take no action in isolation, but shall be prepared faithfully to take our part in any collective action decided upon by the League. We shall endeavour to further any discussions which may offer the hope of a just and fair settlement, provided that it be within the framework of the League and acceptable to the three parties to the dispute—Italy, Abyssinia and the League itself.*

From the Conservative Election Manifesto, *The Times*, 28 October 1935

#### Source B

Extract from a speech by Pierre Laval at Geneva, 2 November 1935.

*Now that the Co-ordination Committee has fixed the date for the entry into force of certain economic measures, I should like to remind you that ... my country is loyally applying the Covenant ... We have all ... another duty to fulfil, one that is dictated by the spirit of the Covenant. We must endeavour to seek, as speedily as possible, an amicable settlement for the dispute. The French Government and the United Kingdom Government are agreed to co-operate in this sphere.*

*This duty is particularly imperative for France, which on 7 January last signed a treaty of friendship with Italy. I shall therefore stubbornly pursue my attempt ... to find elements that might serve as a basis for negotiations. It is thus that I have initiated conversations, though I have never had the slightest intention of putting the results into final shape outside the League. It is only within the framework of the League that proposals can be examined and decisions reached.*

#### Source C

Extract from a speech by Neville Chamberlain to the 1900 Club, reported in *The Times*, 11 June 1936.

*The aggressions [in Abyssinia] was patent and flagrant, and there was hardly any country to which it appeared*

*that a policy of sanctions could be exercised with a greater chance of success than against Italy. There is no use for us to shut our eyes to realities. The fact remains that the policy of collective security based on sanctions has been tried out ... The policy has been tried out and has failed to prevent war, failed to stop war, failed to save the victim of aggression. I am not blaming anyone for the failure ... I want to put forward one or two conclusions which, it seems to me, may fairly be drawn ... I see, for instance, the other day that the President of the League of Nations Union issued a circular in which he said that the issue hung in the balance and urged a campaign of pressure on members of Parliament with the idea that if we were to pursue the policy of sanctions and even intensify it, it was still possible to preserve the independence of Abyssinia*

*That seems to me the very midsummer of madness. If we were to pursue it it would only lead to further misfortunes which would divert our minds as practical men from seeking other and better solutions. ... If we have retained any vestige of common sense, surely we must admit that we have tried to impose upon the League a task which it was beyond its powers to fulfil.*

#### Source D

Extract from a speech by Emperor Haile Selassie to the League of Nations Assembly, 30 June 1936.

*I assert that the issue before the Assembly today is not merely the question of a settlement in the matter of Italian aggression. It is a question of collective security; of the very existence of the League; of the trust placed by States in international treaties; of the value of promises made to small States that their integrity and independence shall be respected and assured. It is a choice between the principle of the equality of States and the imposition upon small Powers of the bonds of vassalage. In a word, it is international morality which is at stake...*

*On behalf of the Ethiopian people, a Member of the League of Nations, I ... renew my protest against the violations of treaties of which the Ethiopian people have been the victim. I declare before the whole world that the Emperor, the Government and the people of Ethiopia will not bow before force, that they uphold their claims, that they will use all means in their power to ensure the triumph of right and respect for the Covenant.*

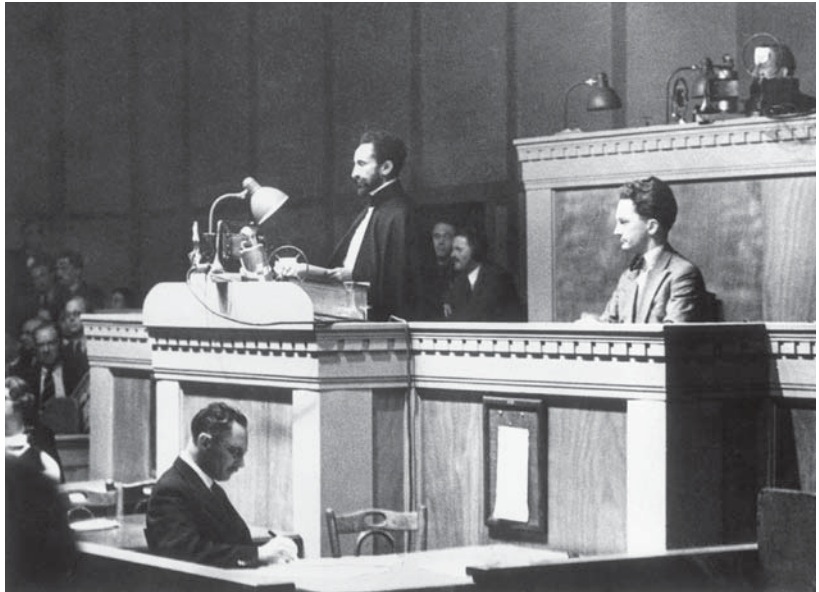






### Source E

A photograph of Emperor Haile Selassie addressing the League of Nations on 30 June 1936, and accusing Italy of being an aggressor and using poison gas in the invasion of Ethiopia, which began on 3 October 1935.



### Source-based questions

- 1 a According to Source D, what were the issues before the League of Nations Assembly? [3 marks]  
b What message is conveyed by Source E? [2 marks]
- 2 Compare and contrast the views expressed in Sources A and B about the relations of their countries with the League of Nations. [6 marks]
- 3 With reference to their origin and purpose, assess the value and limitations of Sources C and D for historians studying the treatment of the Abyssinian crisis by the League of Nations. [6 marks]
- 4 Using the sources and your own knowledge analyse the statement made in Source C that the Abyssinian crisis was a task imposed upon the League of Nations "that it was impossible to fulfil". [8 marks]